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English Literature, - 1000.

GLEANINGS AFTER HARVEST.

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Vernon
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THE
POWER LINE
AND
TILDEN



"THE YEAR CAST DOWN HER GATHERED FLOWERS."

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4/15/20 P.M.

H/1,

Gleanings after Harvest:

OR,

Idylls of the Home.

STUDIES AND SKETCHES.

BY

THE REV. JOHN R. VERNON, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "THE HARVEST OF A QUIET EYE," ETC.

"Thoughts by the soul conceived in secret joy,
Sounds often murmured by the careful voice,
Tried by the nice ear, delicate of choice,
Till we at last are pleased, or self-deceived :
—And this, when, after toil of many years,
Touched and retouched, the perfect piece appears,
To challenge praise, or win unconscious tears,
As the vain heart too easily believed."

GOETHE.

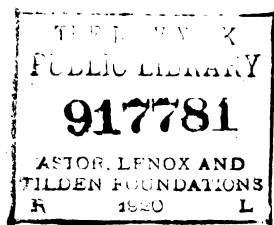
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G_o



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Dedicated

TO "THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HATH GRACIOUSLY GIVEN ME;"

TO "THE FLOCK THAT WAS GIVEN ME;

MY BEAUTIFUL FLOCK."

—GOD GUARD THEM WITH HIS GRACE!





PREFACE.



NOT many words are necessary to preface this book. The Harvest, such as it is, of the writer's thought and observation has, for a long time, been before the public. Its kindly reception may, perhaps, justify the raking together of some scattered ears, which yet lie on the reaped field.

These Studies and Sketches are more or less suitably brought together under the title of "Idylls of the Home." It is the band with which the sheaf is tied. They form a somewhat new departure from the collections of Essays, their predecessors. Such a new attempt by an Author, already kindly received in one department of literature, is always an experiment hazardous and anxiety-giving. But a workman may, in the later years of life, judge of his work almost as though he were another man. The writer should have become the critic, and be able, with some maturity of judgment, to select and reject. Much of his work he will willingly let die. Some of it, judged by the standard of former accepted work, he may think to be, at any

rate, not inferior to this, and so may wish to give it a chance of life.

There is, in all these Studies and Sketches, an earnest, even a religious, purpose. Some were written in life's early Summer; some in the later; some in its Autumn days. Let them live, if they be worthy. If not, let them pass into the Limbus of Life's many mistakes, and its abundant shortcomings. They will have hurt no one. They may have pleased, possibly even have benefited, some.

The Study in verse is, of course, the most daring of these attempts. To write it long ago, to revise it to-day, this has been with its Author a labour of love. Now it will soon be seen whether or no is thus presented but a fresh rendering of the oft-repeated "Comedy," *Love's Labour's Lost*.

The story of the "Solitary," written before the collected Essays, may be therefore permitted still to retain, without tedious iteration, Wordsworth's familiar line.

Apology is needed for the adoption, in one of the minor poems, of the incorrect Miltonic idea concerning the present habitation of the "Lost Spirits." In the Dramatic Study, and in "The Wren," clear distinction between the state before and the state after the Resurrection of the body, may seem to be wanting. The exigencies of poetic diction may be pleaded in extenuation. At any rate, the writer has not in his *verse* ventured to bring the action into that Presence "*where Angels fear to tread*." Paradise, and not

Heaven, is intended to be the bound of this even then too ambitious verse.

If it be objected that a tinge of sadness pervades some of these Studies, it is urged that they are studies from life, and that experience of this present life is antagonistic to optimism. Also that that ending of a story may in truth be called happy in which is gained, even at the last, "the far-off interest of tears."

It but remains to thank the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Religious Tract Society—the latter for use permitted of the first four poems of "Only a Little One;" the former for permission to reprint the verses, "Enlisted," also the sketch "Haddon Hall," together with leave to use the illustrations of this Dream-paper. The Author's warm thanks are also given to his old friend Arthur Hopkins, and to his new friend Allan Barraud, for their beautiful contributions to this volume.

Let the Gleaner now lay down his sheaf, and go his way, over the bare fields, in the twilight, Homeward. And may the gleanings even, which are dedicated to His service, find acceptance with the Master of the Harvest!

T. ©. Δ.



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SECOND BLOSSOM:

OR,

Husband and Wife.

GLEANINGS AFTER HARVEST.

SECOND BLOSSOM :

OR,

Husband and Wife.

PROLOGUE.

THIS sweet Summer (I am writing in the middle of October, 1868)—this rare Summer seems loth to leave us. The great fervour of heat parted from us, it is true, some time ago ; but a tender, mellow warmth, sometimes even oppressive still, lingers yet indulgently about the wondering land. Steady, soft warm showers, alternating with kind, gleamy days, these have, it would seem, gained the confidence of the hesitating and diffident woodlands and orchards ; and they have dared to trust the strange and unwonted clemency of the dying Year. So we see the rare and pathetic spectacle of the child, Spring, upon the lap of Autumn. There is the familiar Autumn look of things, only quieter and less disturbed this year ; the hill-sides with the many-coloured robe, in which the dark yew-trees are beginning to stand out so conspicuously ; the fading larches alongside of the rich, green firs. The brown madder, crimson-splashed here and there, of the dogwood, makes it distinct in the pale hedgerows and the flushed copses ; the chestnuts have been obliged to let drop their wealth of ripe nuts, and are trying to hide it away under a heavy covering of broad leaves ; the apple-orchards have the quiet, waiting look, in the warm misty mornings, a look as of work

being over, and be the result much, or be it little, there are the yellow, and green, and red apples scattered or clustered about the still branches. The broad-fern has lost heart and vanished from the lanes ; the bracken has "rusted on the crag," or grown yellow in the damp hedge ; the prickly-fern, and the hard-fern, and the lady-fern, which all mean to brave the Winter, have gotten their russet ripe-green garb.

Thus we have the Autumn landscape, even as in other years ; only quieter, more peaceful and unhurried.

But now the strange element is found in the timid intrusion of Spring into all this set state of Autumn routine, reminding us a little of Esther's fearful entrance into the presence of Ahasuerus, ready to faint and die unless he hold out the golden sceptre and reassure her with his smile. But as for Spring, the great heat, and the following showers, first put the idea into her head ; and then the smile was so kindly, and the sceptre of golden sunlight so graciously slanted down to her, that she stole in nearer and nearer, and with confidence growing more entire, so that now we see her at last standing unabashed in the grave presence of Autumn. And thus I have seen, as the train whirled me by, a larch grove in new and tender leaf, after the burning drought, and after the rain—scant leafage and scattered, no doubt ; the ghost of Spring's abundance ; sadder to see than Autumn, we should in some moods pronounce. Over the carmine-streaked chocolate of the cornel, and among its jetty berries, some bunches of ivory-white flowers have surprised me, sauntering in the lanes ; there are places (*e.g.*, Taunton) where the chestnuts, to their amaze, have found their hands, just emptied of ripe nuts, filled all over the tree with milky spikes and emerald leaves again. I myself, from the box of the Monmouth coach, have seen a young apple-tree in full rosy blossom ; the bilberries were all in pale, flesh-pink flower, and even in new green berry ; the raspberries in the garden had so early taken heart to begin

again, that some ripe fruit was laid on my plate as the result. And amid the russet fern-feathers, and over the blackened, burnt growth, vivid soft baby fronds surprise and gladden the meditative eye (if such a thing may be said to be), edging the old roots and stones beside the track through the wood; while here and there even a pale wood-violet peeps out of a brown, mossy nook.

And, sitting down to tell a simple Christmas story, all that I had lately seen of this second blossom seemed so to fall in with the tone and character of what I had to tell, that I could not choose but preface it with a record of those rare beauties with which old Winter will have made short work before the birth-bells of Christmas herald the dirge-toll of the summer-year. They will sleep, then, in peace, those sweet visitants, under a pure snow-pall, and nothing, I trust, more grim than pale snowdrop-ghosts will haunt their leaf-hidden graves! Spring flowers do not often come twice in the year, far less summer fruits. This year, 1868, however, witnessed the realisation of this rare phenomenon. And sometimes, if not often, the same thing may happen in the year of the heart's brief life. Whether it was so in the case that I am now contemplating; whether a tender blossoming did endeavour to succeed drought, and whether it met with golden sceptre or with frown of doom, the course of my story will shew.



CHAPTER I.

"Life is thorny and youth is vain,
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain."

YES, *he* was to blame, very much to blame, in the matter. He felt that now; had often felt it since that sad day. He had been too exacting; had expected too much; had not enough understood the necessary "give and take" of married life. As a pleasant fiction, the autocracy of the husband is all very well; as a conventional matter-of-course. And in grave questions his will must be paramount, no doubt. But then not *all* questions should be treated as grave matters, nor every little thing forced, by unwise treatment, into becoming a thing of moment.

But suppose this unwisdom has been committed? Suppose these wise reflections are made after and not before the occasion came for them? Suppose that, through gradually bringing it to the edge of danger, and at last giving one rash and rough push, the frail and delicate fabric of married happiness is shattered? What then?

What then? Aye, the answer came like the return of the expected toll of a "passing" bell—which, indeed, is a "past" bell now in our usage. It came with a dull, heavy pain upon the heart, that, asking the question, too well anticipated the answer. "What then?"—why, it is too late then. Yes, too late. It had often been, in silent, miserable hours—often been conned over, and reasoned out, this problem; been put in many points of view, been reviewed in lonely walks, in lonely times in the family circle (alas, that these should be lonely!); oftenest it had been thought over, as now, lonelily by the study fire. But still the inevitable dirge-answer came. It is too late now. And again, dull and muffled, and wearisome: Too

late now. And again, and still recurring through the twilight study-musing, through the meal with wife and children and friends about the table; through the summer-evening stroll, or the winter-evening gathering: Too late! Too late! And during the talk, and at every pause, and in moods of stern acquiescence with the irreparable, and in moods of very woman's yearning, still, and again, for ever: Too late! Too late! Too late!

"Let the dead past bury its dead." Why harp still upon one jarring string? Why ask any more a question whose dreary answer was so got by heart? Why keep on touching a tooth whose dull aching did but increase to an anguish by this instinctive seeking the nerve? Why not acquiesce in what *is* now too late to avoid?

Nay, there are some ghosts that refuse to be laid. The murder is done; the stab was given; the thing is dead. Yes, but its perturbed spirit will not rest! Away, away, with thy haunting loveliness, with thy sorrowful beauty! Away, no tears can raise the dead, and death has come between thee and me! Away, or at least take any form but that! For oh—

"That is truth, the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

And in moments when memory is drugged, or when the mind's powers are actively enlisted, it may vanish, that haunting face of an old agony, of a dead life-joy. But come a lonely hour in solitude, or a lonely hour in society; and lo! the wistful sorrow of the haunting eyes again.

All this Paul Waring felt,—but no, somehow people did not call him ever by his Christian name: all this Waring felt, all this he had constantly felt, for some years now, and over this he still had brooded, alone in solitude or alone with others; arguing with himself, upbraiding his want of energy in that he could not lay his spectre by the force of

will :—but ever, as Paganini did, playing a thousand wailing notes upon a single string.

He had been sitting by the fire ; an unread book open before him. He would now dismiss the subject :—and to aid in this resolve, he laid his book on the table, and began his wonted moody pacing of the room, also a doubly absorbed contemplation of the past. His thoughts left the present now, and sped back into that Past, mentally thumbed and tattered, as it were, with his constant turning it over. And here we come upon him, pronouncing that he had certainly been to blame for that past, and this present, but summing up regret and remorse with that heavy, familiar knell, “ Too late ! ”

Why had he opened the floodgates of this sad river of thought, whose full waters had now been for some time (save for a constant trickle) steadily kept in ? He could not close the gates now, the flood was too strong ; but how came they open ?

Well, it was the work of the Christmas bells, that came suddenly upon him with their sweet, pathetic gladness, while he was dressing in the morning. The Day ; *that* would not of itself have wrought this effect, for the very gladness, which was a property of such days and seasons of meeting hearts and clasping hands, having died out of them for him, had indeed left a twofold sense of hopeless depression in its stead. But those bells—they melted his heart’s sternness, and awoke the dormant yearning and tenderness of it. Was the future necessarily a blank ? Had the past been a well-managed thing ? Could anything be done in the present ? Often as these questions had been answered and dismissed, here they were again, made not unreasonable in the atmosphere of the music of those Christmas bells.

And after they had ceased (yet still breaking out at intervals), their influence remained. A tender influence, a

kindly influence, a hopeful influence. Hence, he had been led on into thus going over his heart's accounts again—with the old result of finding himself bankrupt.

Those old days ! The bells brought them back ; and everybody was happy, specially with *home-happiness* at Christmas-time ; and it seemed to come with a sort of surprise to his heart, that all was so *different* with him. How was it ? And in his moody pacing he recalled the sad day of three years ago ; just before the Christmas, and so darkly blotting out the joy of that happy season. He recalled it, vainly, he felt, but unresistingly now, and more in sorrow than in anger.

A day, preceded, heralded by smaller troubles, pattering drops before the storm. An older man—older than his years—married to a wife younger than hers—after a short engagement, which had not given them time either to assimilate or to discover the hopelessness of a life-long attempt to do so : circumstances had in the first instance been against them. And coming from a premature old-bachelor life, no doubt he *had* grown to be (he felt) too exacting ; no doubt he had expected too much. Hence, many little uncomfortable clashings as the years went on : he had set his will against hers, he bitterly owned, in small matters, whose concession would have won her to take a pride in yielding, in greater, to him. And thus it came about that a sort of soreness had arisen ; a cloud had gradually overcast the bright years of their first married life. He was conscious (as, like Napoleon, he fought over again the lost battles, and saw where here or there another movement might have changed all), he was conscious of a growing sternness and even harshness towards her ; an almost nervous looking out for occasions of asserting his marital authority, against (he now saw) slight and harmless whims, petulancies, fancies. “Like a rose-leaf I will crush thee !” —this had been the tone of his mind at last towards his

"airy, fairy, Lilian." And her *name* was really Lilian. "A little rose-bud," he used to fondly call her—

"A rose-bud, set with little wilful thorns."

And of course a sort of resentment, an increase of wilfulness and petulance had grown up in her, to meet this morbid attitude of his mind. Partly the love of teasing, partly that contrariety which lurks in our nature; thoughtlessness, two parts, to wilfulness, one part; at any rate the result of it all was a sort of antagonism in the mind of each toward the other. And thus the little rift had begun, of which one sings—

"It is the little rift within the lute
That by-and-by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all."

And, this begun, a hair even suffices to bring on the fatal and irreparable cleft. And a hair it was, the veriest of trifles, which, in this case, as in a moment, silenced all the old, dear, and pleasant music of their once happy married life.

So he bitterly thought, as he miserably perused once more, in his moody pacing, the smeared annals of that wretched day.

Slight incidents; seeming too trifling to set down on paper, but yet leading to grave results enough. How it all came before him: the rising in the morning with the comfort and the confidence of home about him; and little foreboding that one bitter hour before evening would leave him as a man—

"Who has seen the raging torrent
Sweep his happy home away,
And yet lingers by the margin,
Staring blankly at the spray."

About some letter it was, this was the hair which split

the rift into a cleft. Some trifling matter, some laugh of hers, some half-challenge thrown out to him ; some little, galling, defiant word. And his brow darkened, as he held out his hand for the letter ; which was first laughingly, and then peremptorily, refused to him. Was it not a small matter ? But it became a thing very serious and important soon. For his lip (he felt) grew white, and his hand trembled, but his voice wavered not, as he steadily insisted upon obedience to his will. Alas, it was now an open and stubborn rebellion, and war was regularly declared ! Why, why did not she yield gracefully, seeing how important the point had become in his eyes, and be held at once in the arms that even then, as ever since, upon her yielding, were yearning to fold her to his heart ? But the devil of pride had come now to reinforce the imp of wilfulness in the wife's breast, and the gate was locked, and the portcullis down. Why, why did he ever make the matter one of such life and death consequence, instead of letting it pass before the smoke had turned into a giant ? But he *had* made it of this importance. And it was now too late to cry over spilt milk.

So it came to this pass, that an ultimatum was delivered, first by word of mouth, and then in cold, hard writing ; and that the ultimatum was rejected.

The life was a blank life since. It was settled down to now ; had been settled down to, for this long time. In vain had overtures been distantly made, in the hope that submission would follow ; the fiend of stubbornness had obtained absolute possession of the beleaguered heart, and the wistful watching outside the walls was altogether in vain. So by degrees the situation had been mutually accepted. Love and caresses were of the past ; it was of no use keeping the shell when the kernel was gone. But a decent outside had to be shown to the world, to the servants, to

the children. Husband and wife were to acquiesce in a state of virtual separation ; a separation, that is, of hearts, though not of lives. All was to go smoothly, and indeed went smoothly, before the world. But in each heart—at any rate in the heart which we are now dissecting—life was an unutterable blank, and death a sighed-for relief in the far distance. The duties of life remained. The joy of life had gone.

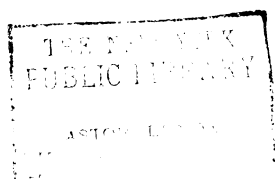
Well, well, it was settled down to now. It could not be helped ; why recall the irreparable past ? But so it was, that he was not the man to forget, or to become really indifferent, or to acquiesce in a state of things so alien from that which had been his ideal. Sensitive he was ; woman-hearted, for all his sternness and the iron in his character.* So his life was (however, not even his wife suspected this) a broken life, a dreary life, a lonely life.

Ah, those Christmas bells again ! These reminiscences came somehow vividly to his mind this morning. But *cui bono* ? It was a peculiarly lonely grief. To no other than to his wife could such a matter be honourably spoken of. And it is evident that his wife was the last person whose confidence he could seek in this matter. Children they had, but there was not for him much happiness in this possession. The constraint which had arisen between his wife and himself had spread also over his communion with his children. He had become cold to them, estranged from them. He had acquiesced in the fact of there being a real, though not an outward, separation between himself and his wife ; and thence he tacitly concluded that they would be of her party, and not for him, if not openly against him.

So he had been kind, but cold, reserved, undemonstrative. He was loved, perhaps, more than he knew, but

* See some verses written by him at this time (and first printed at the end of this story). Found by the Wife among the Husband's papers, when he had gone.





timidly, with little sign given. He saw them cling to her, and he noted the hush when he came into the room (though in truth he never chilled or checked their pleasure, only held aloof from it); and he secretly and bitterly felt how well founded his suspicions had been.

His was thus a lonely life. A life pervaded with a loneliness that was every hour felt. A life that never became indifferent to the pain and desolation of its loneliness. A life that could not forget; a heart that would not become indifferent; a solitary crag that longed for the fair mainland from which it had been rent by a convulsion.

“ They stood aloof, the scars remaining ;—
A dreary sea now rolls between ;
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.”

For married life is an intimate compact ; and if the husband holds the authority externally, yet the woman's power is this (if he have a sensitive and loving disposition)—that she can utterly wreck the happiness of his home.

CHAPTER II.

“ Each voice four changes on the wind
That now dilate and now decrease,
Peace and good will, good will and peace,
Peace and good will to all mankind.
“ This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wished no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again.”—*In Memoriam.*

BUT in the midst of his bitter, unspoken soliloquy, the bright little wife bustles in, with cherry-cheeked children, wholesomely cold, and all ready for Church.

There was, I suppose, something of a haggard look in his face as he turned towards the opening door. His spirit had not gone back from the windows of the eyes quite in time to escape being seen. At any rate, she came up to him, and laid her hand anxiously on his arm. "Are you unwell, dear?" she said, resuming for a moment the tender word whose use had been now of late, by tacit agreement, laid aside.

"For who would keep an ancient form
Through which the spirit breathes no more?"

"Are you unwell, dear?" with hand lying on his arm, and anxious, upturned face. But his soul had had time now to get down from his eyes, and he replied in his usual grave quiet way, "No, Lilian, thank you, I am well. Is it time for us to go?"

For a moment she kept her hand where it was, and a strange, wistful dew softened her eyes (was this also the work of the bells?). But he did not see this; he was looking out of the study window with that dreamy, absent look which had become habitual to him now. So her hand fell, and they started on their walk.

There had been sharp October frenzies, and dull November mists, and keen December frosts, before the year had come to wear the calm outside which it wore to-day. Yesterday, Waring had paced along these garden walks, and had mused, after his abstracted fashion, upon the stiff, frost-hardened leaves scattered about them, leaves ribbed, like skeletons, with a thin white rime upon the surface. He had seen the rigid corpses of the blackened summer flowers, decayed dahlia stalks, gaunt withered lily-sceptres, unopened rosebuds changed into the appearance of dead flesh—even the chrysanthemums pinched into dirty, withered rosettes. And one of the birds that had tried to outstay the summer-time lay frozen to the gravel-

path, the thin legs turned upwards, the quick wings still, the tender trills of song hushed.

He had brooded over all this death that had followed life, and this desolation that had succeeded to the Eden-bloom, with a half-instinctive sense of sympathy and fellowship. He had taken in, but not applied, the parable ; nay, on detecting the bias of his thoughts, he had checked them suddenly, and, turning on his heel, had sought refuge in his Study. He had, even at first, always had a Study, being fond of reading, and in some degree also an author ; and liking to have a retiring room from company, in the evenings, or in his leisure days from town. But in old times there had commonly been a welcome associate there ; a little sofa had been placed by him as a lure, and he had not often in the old days been alone in his Study. He would have been lonelier now if he had not been alone.

To-day, however, the dead earth had buried its dead. A quiet three hours' snow in the night had laid a mask over the land. Now, there was little to be seen of the more obtrusive desolation. The still, blank shroud was over all. The white external calm never hinted of the decay and death which lay a few inches beneath its surface. More barren and deathly even than the dead earth, its appearance was calmer, and its utter barrenness and death was not an obtrusive thing, as it swelled in rosy mounds edged by the blue slanting shadows ; or here and there stretched away in a plain of driven white, sparkling all over in the morning sun. And it was pleasant, if your heart was in good tune, to see the glee of the children over the first snow of the Winter.

But Waring paced gravely on, looking neither to this side nor to that ; never reproving the somewhat unruly glee of the young ones, but never showing the least sympathy with it. The Christmas bells were busy enough now in the still, frozen air. How glad they were ! How plaintive !

How instinct with memories ! How steeped in regrets ! How oppressively saddening to a sad heart was the pathos of their unutterable sweetness ! I think they had a secret strong influence upon both Wife and Husband, and set their hearts, as it were, to a music of which the words were to be given presently.

Be this as it may, she crept up nearer to him again. She took his arm, which was coldly, but of course, at her service. Who knows ?—perhaps she longed to press it to her bosom as in old days. But there was no encouragement to this, there would have been no response on his part. He walked gravely on, with measured step ; eyes bent on the ground. And the bells, seeming full of an earnest meaning which had not a language—which vainly strove for a language ; the bells reproached, entreated, expostulated, pleaded, so full of the Christmas message, that hearts which were shut against accepting it yet could not exclude a certain influence, a process resulting in a sensitiveness for the interpretation, if it should be given, of that message of good will and peace.

So they entered the church. The Rector was not a man given to *excess* of Ritual. He was, indeed, one of those who hold that things beautiful should go beautifully. His care, however, was, in the first instance, for the very heart and marrow of religion ; for minor matters, subservient to this, he could wait. He was not one of those men who, for some mere question of preference, will plunge the parish into a turmoil of dissension, split it into two sharply-defined parties, and neutralise their own influence for good with regard, at any rate, to one half of their people. So, having his own preferences, he kept them in abeyance, and bided his time. Being a wise man, he knew well that the world moves on, and that the greatest obstructions move with it, even unconsciously to themselves. He certainly had once made an effort for a surpliced choir, but Waring, who was the Squire of the

parish, had so determinedly set himself against the idea that the worthy priest had gracefully waived the matter. He had good-humouredly said that it was but for the present that he did so, and that he doubted not but that the Squire would himself urge upon him its adoption as the time went by. People were being imperceptibly educated, he said, and the connection between Popery and a decent white linen garment was daily becoming less a matter of course to the thinking mind. Fitnesses of worship which, twenty years ago, "High Churchmen" would not have ventured to attempt, were adopted now even at some Meeting-houses. But the thing was a matter of preference, not one of principle; therefore he could wait. He had a keen æsthetic taste, and he was accustomed to contend that the beauty of the Service was no merely indifferent matter; that devotion was really stirred, awakened, helped on, by externals; that, constituted as we are, the faculties of imagination, love, and appreciation of the beautiful and the fit, ought all to be enlisted, together with the more spiritual element, in our worship, and that each would be found to help the other.

But Waring—whether that the fount of his own imaginativeness and warmth of heart had been really sealed, or from prejudice, or from whatever cause—could not concede this; and in his grave, kind way, negatived the force of the Rector's arguments. He would not obstruct, but he would not help; and he being the one man in the parish, and employing most of the labour there, and influencing all the farmers and shopkeepers, the parish might be considered to be against the plan if the Squire was. And the good Priest cared too much for his own influence over the hearts of his people with regard to vital matters, to allow of his risking it for that which was not of vital importance, however it might be a thing desirable.

This, however, by the way. The church was a fine building, well and recently restored, and the ancient use in

that Parish of extemporising a dwarf shrubbery along the aisles at Christmas time had given way to the more modern method of decorating with emblems and texts, all forming parts of one well-considered whole. And the old familiar Christmas texts seemed indeed to give that language for which the bells had been anxiously seeking, "Peace and good will;" "Good will and peace;" "Peace and good will to all mankind." And the hymns and the whole service seemed redolent with this Christmas savour of "Peace on earth, and mercy mild."

All these things, no doubt, prepared the ground for the seed of the sermon. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another"—this was the theme—and you could understand why the bells were content to be quiet now; for their earnest hinting seemed at last to have found an adequate exponent. Without an idea of how his words went home to some individual hearts, the Preacher took up that persuading and pleading which the bells had begun, and opposed the unconquerableness of Love to all the hard and cruel arguments with which Estrangement would justify itself. "This is the Christmas time," he urged, "the time of love. The time for laying by comparatively new unkindness, and reverting to old kindliness and former affection. The time for revising the pages of the Past. He was shooting an arrow at a venture, he knew; but in this cold and evil world winged seeds of dissension were ever flying about, and it was hardly likely that they had found lodgment in no heart here. Ah! there *might* be—there might be instances among them even now—mutual lives that once were fair and well-kept gardens, but that now were all overgrown with this choking weed; the sweet flowers that once were so well tended hidden, and like to die; the pleasant fruits neglected that once were so precious and so dear; the garden a wilderness now, and that a desert which once bloomed like Eden."

And some hearts among the hearers responded with a sympathetic emotion, which ran parallel with the Preacher's words, or followed them as a muffled peal. Was there, for any listener, a Toll, with the sound—an echo of that Dirge-bell which had, mingling, negatived the influences of the Christmas chimes in the morning?

But the Preacher went on, taking up, it seemed, the thought in the hearer's heart.

"All this may be so, all this *is* so, perhaps one may sadly and silently reply ;—but if so, why vainly invoke a trouble which has no remedy? The ordered garden of the former days is now a tangled thicket : close the gate, let not the outer world enter to see it. This is all that can be done. It is now too late to mend the ruin.

"Ah ; but is it, can it be thus too late? Ring out, bells of Christmas, and give your pathetic denial to so cold and hard a verdict ! Tell the dull world of a love which was not too proud to be the wooer, to stoop to seek first for reconciliation. A love which, after Paradise lost, could yet exert itself to set before the sullen-hearted and rebellious the sweet and softening hope of a Paradise yet to be regained ! And surely, in that which was a garden, where once flowers grew, where once fruit ripened, although now neglect and confusion have taken the place of the sweet blossoms and the pleasant fruit, yet if you would part the briars, and tear up the weeds, the roots of the flowers would be found to remain, the trees themselves are not cut down. At least it is worth the experiment. Even this very day let it be made ; even this very day let the deserted garden be entered, and search be made for the hidden flowers ! The flowers of old confidence, and tenderness, and kindness ; the flowers of gentleness, and forbearance, and peace, hopefulness, and love. They are there still, the roots are there ; they are not dead. It is not yet too late. Another Christmas, and the great gulf of Death may have opened between you and

the happy garden of the Past. You would then give worlds for the opportunity which you are doggedly refusing now. You then would cry aloud what now your heart is too proud to whisper a little. But your voice shall then die across the great distance. They cannot hear you : no, not though you plead with passionate fervour. It is all in vain ; though with streaming eyes and clasped hands you stand by the brink, and cry out in the hunger and desolate desiring of your heart. You would forgive then. But the words return into your own bosom. You would forbear then. But the opportunity has passed. Return, O loves, O trustings ; O old and dear confidences ! Ah, the voice dies across the Abyss ; only a dull echo answers from its chasms, Too late ! too late !”

There were more of such words—words not very wonderful, not very eloquent, but earnestly spoken, and here and there finding their mark. And when the sermon ended, the culmination of the Service afterwards took up the theme, and concluded with the pæan of “Glory to God on high ; and in earth peace ; good will towards men !”

And then the bells burst out again. Glad, as it would almost seem, to have had their music interpreted, they made the old Tower rock with their joy-peals, and the plain-tiveness of them seemed almost merged in their ecstatic gladness. Persuading, pleading, reminding, all through the walk home ; weaving words of the Sermon in their tones ; changing their arrangement, urging them in new combinations, piecing them anew ; here a fragment, and there a sentence : “joy and gladness ; peace and good will ; good will and peace.” Yes, they became vehement, importunate voices, that would not be denied ; ah ! was there still, for some who heard, that spectre-tolling, that dirge-answer which replied to the morning chimes ? Or did any response come in any heart, like the distant peal that might now and

then be detected in a pause of the near bells, if the wind just then set that way?

Whether this might be so or not, Waring and his wife paced home in silence. So the bells at any rate found patient listeners.

At lunch little Gladys asked her Mother, "Mother, do you think Mr. Johnstone would say that *our* garden was in bad order?" But her Mother found out suddenly that the child was spilling the soup, and admonished her to mind her dinner. "It isn't dinner," persisted the little one; "it's Christmas, and we have late dinner with you. But, Mother, don't *you* think our garden is nice?"

"Never mind, dear," she answered, driven to extremity; "Mr. Johnstone did not mean that kind of garden. Besides, he couldn't see ours for the snow."

Lunch ended, Lilian ran upstairs to her Boudoir; Waring retired to his Study.

CHAPTER III.

"Ah! take the imperfect gift I bring,
Knowing the primrose yet is dear,
The primrose of the later year,
As not unlike to that of Spring."

WE have seen enough of the interior of the Study, I think, and are tired of Waring's somewhat dull company. Let us leave him, therefore, to his own meditations, and steal quietly with Lilian into her Boudoir, invisible, unsuspected spectators. The children are in the Nursery; Mother could not have them with her yet, she told them in answer to their petition. And there is little fear that the denizen of the Study should come to break in upon her solitude; even in the old days he rarely did this; it would have been her part to trip downstairs, and (on such an afternoon as this) nestle on his lap, with her arms round his

neck, and chatter to him ; or lay her golden head upon his shoulder, and listen happily and contentedly to his earnest, quiet talk. So, except for our unguessed intrusion, the little wife can (if she wishes it) count on an undisturbed afternoon. Yet, see, she has risen from the chair which she had drawn to the fire, and turned the key in the door ; we cannot now creep out, if we would ; we must e'en stay where we are, and amuse ourselves as we best may, by watching her.

It is rather dull work for the first hour, for indeed she has done nothing but remain with her head rested on her wee hand, absently staring into the fire. A sort of don't-care look, however, which has somehow come to be almost a part of her expression, has been laid aside now, or has unconsciously melted away. There is a look of quiet weariness in her abstracted eyes ; a shade of intense melancholy over her very lovely face. Nothing more than this, no change in look or in expression for a whole hour. Then at last you might see two large tears trickle down through the fingers, and fall upon her dress.

"Pshaw !" she says then, "how foolish I am ! I don't think I have ever cried about it before. But now—oh, it must be the bells ; and then that Sermon ! Ah ! shall I let the hardness go, and the tears come, just for this once ? My ruined garden, that was so beautiful ; my ruined garden ! under the snow, showing no sign, but how desolate !"

And she bows her head, kneeling by the sofa, and gives way to a convulsion of sobs and weeping. This gradually has hushed into a calm again ; and she sits quiet on the floor by the sofa, again resting her head, that aches now, upon her hand.

"I wish I could lay it on his shoulder—on Paul's shoulder. It aches ; and my heart is so lonely, so desolate. Such a ruined garden. And once——"

But here were the tears again.

"It is of no use," said little Lilian ; "it is too late now. Yet, ah ! Mr. Johnstone said so earnestly, just as if he were talking to me, that it was not. Not too late, he said, while the roots of the flowers had life. But have they? I feel now that for me they have. But Paul's love died quite at one frost. It can't have been much, surely, for one frost to kill it. Yet, oh yet, it was so tender, so sweet, so dear ! Ah ! the garden is the saddest of all, Mr. Johnstone said, when you may see that once it was kept so carefully, but now it is ruined. And that was true. All that he said was true. And the bells seemed all to mean the same. But for all that, it comes too late. Paul never minded it, never thought of it. The garden is ruined ; the very roots are dead. It is too late for us.

"I was foolish," she went on. "I was foolish and wrong, I know ; but I fancied he would be sure to come round in time, if he really loved me. So I waited and waited, and would not give in ; and every day made it more difficult. I didn't know he could be so cold and stern to me. And I almost got to hate him for being able to do so without me. Then that hard letter. But you see in *his* heart the roots were dead. His love went clean away. I thought I had managed to get to be don't-care as well. I tried to make the children Husband and children too. I went out a good deal, and even got friends that I knew made him angry. But he did not speak ; we are just separate since. There is a gulf between us already. Ah ! how *silly* I am to keep crying so."

Another silence. Then she murmured, "I have really been sadly to blame : I have known that for long now. But I was wilful, and would not listen to my better self. And now nothing can be done. It is too late now."

Too late. Again there came across her heart that interpreted protest of the Christmas bells ; but she sadly shook her head and said again, "It is too late now."

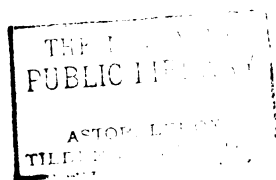
"I have a fancy," she presently said, "to look at some of the old letters. How long it is since I read one; since *that* time I have not cared to; before that I had no need. 'Tis all that I have left now;—dried flowers from the ruined garden."

She went to her davenport, and chose a bundle tied with faded blue ribbon. "I will have the last year's letters before we married," she said; and settled herself down upon the floor by her sofa again. It was part of her softened mood that made her just then feel an almost insupportable yearning to be nestling, as in old days, against Paul's knee, and to feel his hand now and then laid tenderly on her head, or playing with her tresses. However, she arranged herself against the unresponsive sofa instead.

And then she undid the letters, and read one or two, and presently laid them down to think again. The rush of old memories, of old feelings that they brought! The imperious demand that awoke in her heart, of an old want, stifled long, held down, silenced, but not destroyed!

She mused, with the letter last read still open in her hand. What hopes theirs had been at the time that this was written; hopes fairly realised too; for had she not once been a happy—oh, a very happy, wife? The sympathy, the tenderness, the confidences of two minds in one accord; the never feeling lonely; and, if ever unhappy, the never being without the kindest of support, the deepest interest, the most womanly entering into all that was of moment to her. Ah! what were those trifles for which she had given all this up—what were they in the balance with it? How had she indeed sold the fair, fruitful acres, to contest the possession of a strip of bare sand! "But he had become so tiresome, sometimes; so exacting." Oh, foolish! Her piques, her small resentments, her fancied injuries; could these outweigh that happy time which she had bartered for the bitter right of nursing them?—Her own way! What was this, after all, compared to the possession of her old love?





And she mused on the times when those letters were written. How he used to come over ; how he came over that happy Christmas, after a longer absence ; and the flush and the joy of it all came back.

Her eye rested on the letter which she had begun to read. Strange, he had then expressed a doubt of himself, a fear lest he should be too stern, too exacting. And she had smiled at this, and told him, in her reply, that having had her own way for eighteen years now, she was quite content to be obedient in future. Ah ! she had not known nor guessed the strength, the sternness of that nature. Yet he had loved her ; undoubtedly he had loved her. And now that was over.

Another letter lay beside her. She picked it up, and dreamily began to read it. How well she remembered it as she read ! It had followed upon their reconciliation after some slight quarrel, and he had been so pleased, so fond, so proud of her, because she had owned herself in the wrong, and cried on his knee. He told her in the letter how he loved her doubly for this : and he went on to say (O, how strange and pathetic the words seemed now !), " In our married life, dearest, such little clashings *will* (in this imperfect state) doubtless arise at times, especially in our trial time, before the passing of the years has changed love's delicate shoots into ripe wood. And if you have been wrong, I shall, I know, be apt to seem cold and stern, and as though the estrangement did not make me wretched. But, believe me, that while I may seem coldest and most reserved, my heart will be hungering ever with an intense yearning for that first even slight advance from you which will render it possible for me to let loose the flood-tide of my great love again. It may seem strange to say this ; but I distrust myself so ; I fear my unfitness for married life : I know how easily my manner (which I cannot alter), when I am hurt or unhappy, might be misunderstood. How miserable I have

been these last few days ! How intensely I have yearned for you ! And you tell me that you thought I did not care !”

She let the letter fall, and pressed her hand upon her forehead, steadying her hot brain to think. Ah ! *might* there be a hope ? should she try ? The words of that Sermon came back. It is not too late, the Preacher said. It is *not* too late, the bells had repeated. O, all this *might*, it *might* have also struck a chord in his heart ! Should she try ?

And just then her eye fell on *that* hateful letter, the letter that had caused all the quarrel. There it lay : she had somehow brought it out with the bundle of old letters. Was this a mere chance ? Was there not a meaning, a directing in this ? Clasped hands, an upward look for a moment ! and then—

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A timid tap at the Study door. A soft, hasty step up to the chair where he was sitting. The face was turned away, and did not see the imploring look, the streaming eyes—the heart almost sank. “Husband, dear, I have brought *that* letter ; will you read it ? And oh, will you forgive your little wife ; and let us begin all again ?” Here the poor child broke down.

The face was turned to her now ; the eyes were full of tears : the look mild, grave, loving ; in a moment she was clasped to his heart. “I thank God, my child !” he murmured, “I thank my God that He has broken the long, hopeless spell of loneliness and desolation !”

She was in his lap now, as in old days *long* ago. “Mr. Johnstone *said* it wasn’t too late,” she murmured, piteously : “oh, can you ever forget it all, and really love me again ?”

“Little wife, I also need to be forgiven : I have been too hard ; but I have suffered.”

“Darling, have you *really* ? I didn’t ever believe you cared much.” And the golden head was laid on his shoulder once more after this long while. “Oh, I have so often

wanted to cry on your coat again, as I used to do. I didn't ever care to cry, now I couldn't cry there ; and so I seemed to get hard and cold. Then have you really, really loved me, really wanted me ? And can you really love me again now, as in the old, old days ?”

But as she glanced for a moment from him to the table beside them, she needed not the fervent answer which yet was given. For there was also the bundle of *her* old letters, and on one which lay open, a big, new, blotting tear.

Just then, the Christmas bells broke out again, sweet exceedingly ; with a tender, subdued ecstasy, with an earnest triumphant gladness, that came and went like the Christmas chorus of the Angels.

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Little remains to tell. That was a happy Christmas evening at the Hall. It was especially curious to notice the effect upon the children of the altered state of things. The instinctive perception of a change in the Father, and their gradual, shy creeping up to him. They could not reason on the change, but a looker-on might see that they felt it. In truth, expression, manner, all were different from that which they at all remembered. The dull, gnawing pain had on a sudden stopped ; the heavy burden been lifted from the heart ; the man was an altered man. Not that outwardly there was any definable mark of this to a careless observer. But children are not careless ; they cannot explain, but they perceive. And in finding his Wife again, her Husband afterwards told her, he had found his children too.

And we may end our story by the old formula, “and they lived happy ever after.” The change was complete. *He* was indeed more tender, more allowing ; but this was not *needed*, though appreciated. When once a woman has really thrown aside self on behalf of one she loves, 'tis wonderful what she can attain to do.

Mr. Johnstone's choir appeared in surplices for the first

time on Easter Day. They were the gift of the churchwarden elect, Mr. Waring ; and were worn at his express desire. Mr. Johnstone thought that the world had moved on quickly indeed.

“ AFTER MANY YEARS.”

(*Found among Waring's papers, after his death.*)

“ But yet, the pity of it, Iago !—O, Iago, the pity of it, Iago ! ”

WE used to say, in the old courting days,
 “ Our love is founded on a rock eternal ;
 Firm as the compact which, the Bridegroom says,
 Shall bid defiance to the Gates infernal.”

It was not so. We were mistaken, Love.
 “ Love ? ” Yes, the old word lingers in the saying,
 Nor can old use quite yield its treasure-trove,
 —With the old memories round us,—praying,—praying.

And ghosts of former kindly hours draw near,
 Unuttered pathos in their eyes despairing.
 Who could forget that such things were, and dear ?
 And turn away, not weeping, and not caring ?

We were mistaken. It was but of earth,
 The love we deemed of Heaven's love an earnest.
 Yet dull the “ Toll ” that tells its mortal birth,
 The sentence, “ Dust thou art ; to dust returnest.”

A threefold cord, the Wise man says, is strong ;
 Of lasting strength he takes it for a token :
 It was not so with us, nor lasting long ;
 Our cord was sevenfold. But it is broken.

Soft words had saved it. Those wild words of scorn,
Hurl'd in the face of ancient love and kindness,
Bring to the mind the saying, heathen-born,
"Where they would ruin, first the Gods send blindness."

Yes, in the day of Bridegroom, and of Bride,
We deemed our love secure, through joy and trouble;
But in your hour of wild, defiant pride,
You touched it, and it burst—an empty bubble!

What is it now? What is there left to see?
—Piteously left on the profaning fingers?
A dull-hued drop. A useless legacy
For grief. A glory once. A tear that lingers.

Alas, for that frail globe of glorious seeming,
Lit with a radiance none may understand;
A light reflected on our earthly dreaming,
"The light that never was, on sea or land!"

"*Look forward.*" Can it be? The Past is past.
Can graver years regain Youth—Hope—Trust—Glad-
ness?

What might can e'er, with Resurrection-blast,
Recall dead Love from shades of endless sadness?

Yet, for the old days' sake, let it appear
As though the old days were, and love unbroken:
We loved—or thought we loved—each other, Dear;
Let, to the world, the loss remain unspoken.

I would not men should whisper, and should say
"There, there: so have we said it! All is dreaming!
No love can last!"

Ah, come, Dear, come away,
Veiling the dreary truth with cheery seeming!

Let Courtesy and Kindness take the place
 Of the dear dead child, Love, that laughed so gaily,
 —A quiet shade, perpetual on each face,
 Bear witness how we miss it—daily, daily.

It must be so. We cannot bury Love
 That seemed so real—whose spirit is so haunting—
 By building Domes of marble Pride above,
 Or cold Indifference, by idly vaunting.

The globe is shattered. Were it earthen, merely,
 We yet might rivet it, with pains and trouble :
 But who can piece, to its own likeness nearly,
 Now it has burst, that bright ethereal bubble ?

—There is no marriage here, no lasting dearness,
 No helpmeet found for man ; no very friend.
 —The heart migrates to Him, from winter-seariness,
 Who “having loved, loves ever, to the end.”

We toil for love all night. The dull morn, breaking,
 Shews but the empty net. Then, on the shore
 He stands—We see Him, and all else forsaking,
 We breast the waves to Him, and pine no more !

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After a pause—

Shall He who, Love itself, is Love's Creator,
 Bid Love's dry bones to live again, and be
 Its old past self ?

He is the Renovator :

He can do all things. Let us wait, and see.

PASSING THE LOVE OF WOMEN:

OR,

The Brothers.

A DRAMA OF TWO WORLDS.

PASSING THE LOVE OF WOMEN :

OR,

The Brothers.

A DRAMA OF TWO WORLDS.

INTRODUCTION.

Two Men walking together. In the depth of the blue summer sky, two white-robed Angels pause above them.



Angel. Spirit, from flesh released, listen, and hear

That thou wouldst learn.

Lo, I withdraw the veil
Obscuring, from this mortal's mind. He speaks,

And where, to mortal sense no
vague, least, sound
Would pierce, the words distinct to
us arise.

1st Speaker. 'Tis strange ! The scroll,
but now, to memory's sight,
All blurred, regains its clearness. Well
do I

Recall the marvel, after which thought
toiled—

As after a lost dream that frets the mind,—

—Toiled, but still toiled, until this hour, in vain.

2nd Speaker. The mystery, mean you, of our Harold's
death ?

1st *Speaker*. Not *Harold's* death : the death of Maurice.

2nd *Speaker*. How ?

Maurice yet lives !

1st *Speaker*. In this the mystery lies.
 Myself beheld him *die*. Careless he crossed
 The crowded street ; I saw him slip and fall,
 And then amid the maze of horses' feet,
 I saw him trampled, and the heavy wheel
 Rising, passed o'er his body. Then the crowd
 Closed, as the Red Sea waters, round the place.
 Faces of horror theirs, but ghastly calm
 On the white face that, marred with blood and mire,
 Drooped toward the earth, when from the crushing wheels
 They drew the dying man.

But while I gazed,
 —As a great wind that, through the whispering trees,
 Divides his way, and parts them here and there,
 Unheeding of their murmur and complaints—
 A man, his strong brow furrowed deep with pain,
 Parted the swaying crowd, and in his arms
 Received his brother. Then, with firm, swift stride,
 He bore him, yet with all a woman's care,
 From the fast-growing crowd—that pressed and thronged
 To where it might be seen if care and skill,
 Hercules-like, might over-wrestle death.
 Then I, with offered aid, sprang to his side ;
 Aid that he sought not, nor would share his charge.
 Yet stayed I by him, and with him, unchecked,
 I entered.

Awful was the waiting hush,
 That seemed the more intense for the soft tread
 Of those who moved about the unmoving form,
 And bent with heedful brow o'er the pale face,
 And felt for the faint pulsing, as it ebbed—
 —Scarcely to be endured, that dread suspense.

—Yet calmly, and as silence cut in stone,
 Sat Harold—the imperious agony
 By might of love held down.—Until the hush
 Ceased—And with grave face tokening speech of doom,
 The Surgeon drew him near ; words winged for flight
 Heralding life or death. This when he saw,
 Fell agony made tense his o'er-strung mind :
 Yet, with sheer force convulsive, he compelled
 Calmness again ; and with mute lips shaped, "Speak !"

When the few words were said, we shrank away
 Before his eyes whose dearth dried up our souls ;

Then, with a frenzied cry, so fierce and wild,
 'Twere fearful to have dreamed of—locked hands, strained
 In maddened energy of deadly pain—
 With starting sweat-drops and with pallid lips,
 And soul that through his eyes strained to the Heaven—
 He flung himself by that impassive form,
 And through his set teeth hissed his awful prayer :—
 —"Oh God, oh Father, my imploring soul
 Sets to Thee with its gathered life and powers,
 With the whole might and fervour of its will,
 And with Elijah's faith—that, if the soul
 Of this my brother be yet unprepared
 To bear Thy presence, / may take his place,
 And change my fate with his. Let me depart,
 —If need be—to an angry God, so he
 May 'scape eternal Hell, or even gain
 Some years to lead him from his sin to Thee !"

He spake no more, but statue-wise remained ;
 His lips moved not, but we believed his soul
 Half loosed its link, and, in its vehemence,
 Wellnigh departed to urge on its suit
 Beneath the Mercy Throne.

—Now listen yet,
 And credit the impossible.

—Awhile

Aghast we stood, when lo, a sudden mist
 Shadowed our eyes, and, when it passed, behold,
 The eager form, that tempest-passion past,
 Lay as a stately Pine-tree hurled and heaped
 Prone in the flush and beauty of its leaves.
 The fire of the wild soul had fled the eyes,
 And,—all the frenzy of the passion lapsed,—
 We saw him passive lie, and still—and *dead* !
 —Whilst, risen from the couch (on which, but now,
 We saw him white and dying) hale and strong
 Stood Maurice. All perplexed and mazed he stood
 Gazing on Harold—motionless and pale,
 And marred with mortal wounds, upon the bed,
 —And hardly deeming it his brother's form.
 Just then, the passing spirit through the eyes
 Beamed ; and the dying man reached out his hand
 Seeking his brother's, as he knelt beside ;
 Then looked on him, and smiled on him,—and died.

But as a dream all this appeared to us,
 That the vexed memory fails to shape again ;
 And each declared to Maurice—(as by force
 Of some strong influence that controlled the will)
 —The thing to *Harold* had indeed befallen
 That we well knew unto himself had happened,
 And he grew satisfied that this was so,
 And to his wildered memory it seemed
 Himself had borne his wounded brother there.

2nd Speaker. Can these things be? But how?

1st Speaker.

I cannot tell ;

The strange events were lifted from my mind
 As the Magician's Palace, in the tale ;
 And but this moment, to my soul confused
 Appeared again.

2nd Speaker. Stranger than strangest this ;

How should this be? And how could such a love
Clothe a lost soul—mate fitly with the damned?

[*The Angel descends and withdraws from their minds
the memory of the aforesaid mystery.*

1st Speaker.

O'er me, then,

A sudden mist and drowsiness was shed;—

—Of what spake we?

2nd Speaker.

Was it of those thin clouds
That melt to nothing in the vast, wide, blue?

1st Speaker. Yes, I remember me. And of the stream
Whose waters through the vain grasp glitter by,
And leave no trace behind.



PART I. SCENE I.

The Sea. Beneath the Heavens—dark, but gemmed with stars numberless—two Angels are seen brokenly mirrored in the profound Deep.

Irene. How, through the darkness, the grey restless waves
Sway upwards, gently, to us gliding on,
And fall again with pleased and tranquil sigh.

Ithuriel. Behold the men, in this white-bosomed ship,
Alone on the wide waters. To their eyes
We are invisible. Too pure the light,
That clothes us, for the ken of mortal sense.

Irene. Tell me, my Brother, while, on silent wing,
We glide around this world, to minister
To future friends, burdened, awhile, with flesh,
Tell of that spirit that, divorced from life,
Yet bears the burden, and endures the pain,
The passions, and temptations that the soul
Leaves with such bliss, when soaring from the earth,
Leaves at the summons of the thing called Death.

Ithuriel. In part his prayer was heard ; his spirit fled,
His own strong life death from his brother drave,
And, in reward for his so mighty love,
It is permitted him to watch and guard
That brother, 'gainst the enemies that seek
His ruin. Still shall he, as mortals are,
Subjected be to pain and weariness,
To all the weakness and the ills of earth.
And through the period of his brother's days
His doom shall wait for him. He shall have power,
By constant watching, to bring further aids,

And other opportunities, than those
That the just God has given to each soul
Sufficient, if it will, to save it. This
Shall be his rich reward, the recompense
Of his exceeding sacrifice of love,
And of his future watchings and his wars.

Irene. And after, must his loving spirit dwell
Aye with the lost ?

Ithuriel. Of what shall after be
I nothing know. Still, were it thus decreed,
More than he asked, he yet would have received.
But all shall rise, from the dim Future, plain
—And God, our Father, doeth all things well.

SCENE II.

The Heaven and the Earth. A black, starless night. An Angel of Mercy, an Angel of Justice : also Angels entrusted with the attributes of Love, Faith, Gentleness, Strength, Endurance, and other virtues, hold sweet converse in the air, and watch over the sleeping world.

Love. Behold him now,
The earth-clogged Spirit, how the troubled lines
Of strength-subduing weariness, and care,
And watching, and dread conflict, fold his brow
And draw down his enduring lips with pain.
—Would we might succour him !

Gentleness. Sister—we do.
The Angel-beauty of seraphic eyes
Controls and calms the trouble of his heart,
And softens it to patience, and enerves
To more endurance, and to courage—whilst
His beauty-loving eye informs his mind
Of eyes divine, star-bright with sympathy.

Love. Look, how the Fiends, in terrible array,
Glower, with an awful hell-glow in their eyes,
Dead as the white heart of a fire-claspt star ;
See, now they sweep through the dim glooming air
In shadowy semicircle, whilst around
Fleet some, like thin black misty clouds, detached
From the approaching phalanx.

Strength. It doth freeze
His very soul, and make his spirit writhe
Excruciate, to hear the fearful yells
That pause, and die, and then sweep round again,
Harrowing the tingling air. I will glide down,
And whisper to him.

Justice. Brother, you do well,
Within our duty is it, to revive
His failing strength, so but no part we take,
Ourselves, in the fierce strife.

Gentleness. The Fiends retire,
Finding him watchful. Brother, tell us, now,
What power, to shield his treasured charge, is given
To this lone Sprite.

Justice. While that the mortal's will
Steadfast remains, the Spirit shall have force
So 'gainst the Demons to prevail, that scarce
Shall they attain to tempt. But if his will
Shall make surrender, the foiled Spirit then
Shall lose all power to aid, until, again,
It struggle, though but faintly, to revive.

Mercy. What, then, supports a thing so frail and weak
As a poor mortal's feather-fickle will ?

Justice. A higher power than that of all his foes,
The might of God. Further, the boon is given
To this devoted Spirit to oppose
The Tempters, and in great degree to stem
Their onset. Hush ! He speaks.

Spirit of Harold.

Dead weariness -

- Oppresses me, and bows my spirit down
 More than the conflict with the Fiends arrayed.
 Yet would I seize each moment with content ;
 The endless days will come, when I shall muse
 With longing upon these which seem so hard :
 I shall remember the strange melody
 Of Angel-voices, speaking though in words
 That never shall my native language be
 And that I understand not. I shall think
 How dear and sweet it was, to watch and war,
 Heartened by their divine regard, to keep
 The brother of my heart—Darkness will come,
 And anguish never-ending, and unrest,
 That shall not know an object, or a lull,
 And Demons' forms and voices, unalloyed
 By any sound or sight of loveliness,
 And I shall turn me to escape them all,
 —Whither?

Behold, the eager Fiends return,
 My shuddering soul expects their cries and yells,
 Curdling my sense. The Angel, with the brow
 So fair and open, and with lips compressed
 So firmly, and with eyes so clear, so large,
 So bright—who whispered words to me unknown
 And yet that thrilled me that I almost longed
 For the dire contest, now is watching me,
 And the sweet face, with such blue, loving eyes,
 And golden hair ; and she, whose rounded shape
 Seems gentleness embodied ; and the clear
 And equal gaze of him, from whose curved lips
 Seems to fall measured wisdom : and, besides,
 The trancing beauty of each watching face,
 Distinct with its own loveliness,—ennerves
 And strengthens me. I will think still of you,

In the fierce fight : but, when it fiercest burns,
 I will recall my Brother's face beloved,
 That memory shall suffice to strengthen me,
 That he may never fall into the hands
 Of these abhorréd Demons.

The Angel of Mercy. Ah, they come
 With fresh and strong array. He has fought long,
 Approaches not the hour when rest and sleep
 Are, to his worn and weary frame, decreed ?

Endurance. Not yet awhile. First must this coming fight
 Be fought and won.

Strength. Behold, he nerves himself
 Strongly to bear and to resist. A calm,
 As of an Angel, rests upon his brow.

Love. They come ; their dusky wings oppress the air
 And deepen night around him. How they strive,
 And strike at him with torturing strokes, and howl
 That, like to winds that search a fading tree,
 Their shrieks pass through his soul. They press him hard
 Yet, steadfast by his brother's side, he still
 Affronts them, and with strong stroke urges them
 Back in a heaped dismay.

Gentleness. Yet endlessly
 The flocking squadrons come, and beaten back,
 Fresh hosts assail him, with unceasing hate.

Mercy. Alas, if these fierce hosts might thus assail
 The mortal, guarded by no brother's care !
 Now, scarcely can a whisper reach his soul,
 Ere the foiled tempter, yelling, flees, dismayed.
 Yet still fresh strength is theirs, while his, the worn,
 And almost sinking combatant, grows faint.
 Let us pour out our sympathy in song,
 For the sweet sounds shall blend into a balm
 To heal his troubled soul.

Spirit of Harold. Ye spirits fair,

Mine aching soul upturneth gratefully
 Its weary sense towards you ! Not to flowers
 That can no more bear up, but bow their heads,
 Beneath the burning heat, resigned to die,
 Comes the soft, grateful rain, low rustling down,
 With such refreshing and recovering power
 As to my fainting soul these strains divine !

[*The Demons gather round him, and strive to drown
 the Angel-music with yells and bellowings, and all
 the terrific discord of Hell.*]

It still ariseth, the seraphic song
 —As when, through furious waves that crest and tower,
 Urged by the frantic storm, obscured at times,
 But reappearing with calm, steadfast ray,
 A sealight cleaves the murky, sullen dark.
 —Baffled, the hollow-featured Fiends, at last,
 With added anguish in their ghastly eyes,
 Depart. And, lo ! the great and splendid sun
 Arises in his glory, and reveals
 The death-flushed trees, that, in the falling year,
 As the Assyrian monarch, clothe themselves
 In their most stately pageantry, to die.
 Soft slumber beckons, and the trumpet sound,
 Distinct and low, tells me the hour is come
 Allotted me to bow my weary head
 And taste in safety sweetest sleep awhile.
 [*Falls asleep. The Angels depart on other ministries of love.*]

SCENE III.

*A broad sweep of Park-land, isled with masses of trees, and
 clothed with deep brake, the ripe green touched with burnt
 gold. MAURICE walking alone.*

Maurice. When I behold the worn and wrinkled brow
 Of those for whom the golden orb of youth

Has dipped in clouds—and left them void of warmth
And generous fire : of blood, and energy,
Heart-cankered, and embittered ; then my soul
Leaps up with new delight, to think, for me
The battle is unfought, the path untrod,
The harvest field unreaped, great deeds to do ;
The crested waves that toward me towering press,
Unbuffeted, and all the thrill and strife
Yet in the future. Onward will I go ;
The waves of life shall meet my broad, strong breast,
Shattering apart in flakes of foam. I feel
Strength, and glad energy, and proud resolve,
And, in my soul, sufficiency. For me
Shall be no tame and oily-gliding life ;
Mine shall set on, as ocean to his shores,
Glad with the battle-clash of eager waves ;
And mists of good shall rise from me, and be
Great rivers, and shall water thirsty lands,
And raise rich fruits of noble deeds.

My heart

Is large ; I can see far ; and narrow minds
That, as the Penguin, flap their winglets small,
But cannot rise from earth, shall, wondering, hear
The rushing music of my soaring wings,
And blindly gaze upon my strong, swift flight
Lost in the closing sky.

*[By listening Angels might have been heard, while he
mused aloud, a noise of fierce and hard conflict ; and
the shadow-laugh of Fiends, that pressed on a fail-
ing opponent.]*

SCENE IV.

Spirit of Harold. At length they have departed, and their
breath,
Heated and horrible, dries up no more
My fainting soul.

My brother, O, my brother !
Right well I fought. Why did thy will desert
Me, striving for thee ? So that, gradually,
My strength grew weakness, and the Angels fair
Could but compassionate me. How they glared,
The Demons, Pride, and vain Self-Confidence :
How they pressed by me, and I saw thy face
Lighten with their false fire ; and now, alas !
Their poison maddens in thy kindling soul.
—The more, and the more strictly must I watch,
And the more earnestness my spirit stir
To meet, and foil, the banded hate of Hell.
—For me must scorching death await, but not
For thee, my brother ; not to shrivel up
Thy fresh and generous spirit, till it writhe,
A yellow, wrinkled scroll, on which is writ
Nought but the single lonely word, “ Despair ! ”

SCENE V.

Winter. MAURICE, alone, in an oak-carved Hall, beside a
sinking fire. From rooms near come sounds of music and
of mirthful voices.

Maurice. What thing can be denied
Unto a will resolved and strong ? From me
All obstacles fly back, as bending twigs.
—My darling ! I have won her virgin love,
The gentle lustre of her hazel eyes

Brightened exceedingly, full to the brim,
When that I claimed her mine. She looks on me
As on a god, and thinks me great and grand,
And, with a trustful reverence, confides
Her woman's gentler soul on mine to lean.
I will requite her ; all the future smiles
As a broad sweep of landscape, that the sun
Films o'er with soft-hazed glory, as his beams



Flood down from his bright rising in the morn.
These broad lands that lie now in the dim gray
Of the yet moonless night, in silence deep,
That the strange lonely cry, from reedy pools,
Haunts of the wild duck, makes more deeply still ;
These broad lands, that, from childhood's days, to me
Are known in every aspect of the year,
Soon will receive me for their lord, and then,*
Scope shall I have for all my great designs,

* St. Luke xvi. 10.

And Love and Fame shall, strong-winged, fly before,
Drawing life's triumph-car.

By sudden fits
The laughter and the music come to me,
As, from this giant-log, hoary and charred,
At times leaps up a flame that lights the Hall.
My soul leaps up, as leaps the eager fire :
I go to share its glow of life and light,
With my beloved.

SCENE VI.

*Fast midnight. AGLAIA and BEATRICE in their evening attire,
sitting before the fire in their Room.*

Beatrice. Too gentle and too fond, Aglaia. He
Who, having gained your heart's too trusting love,
Forsook it—would not cause there long-lived pain.

Agläia. But in *his* brow unfailing truth is throned,
And in his spirit true nobility,
And, in his heart, a love which will grow strong
With passing time, that weakens, in the weak,
Their early ardour. When he told his love
With earnest pleading, all my soul leapt up
In wondering gratitude ; and, for a while,
I bent my head upon his breast, and heard
The inner language of his loyal heart
Speaking to mine. Then did his gentle hand
Smooth, with a loving tenderness, my hair,
And I looked up through tears, and met his gaze
Lit with deep love and pride, and I was claspt
In the safe refuge of his sheltering arms.

Beatrice. I would have met his look with steady gaze
Have read his soul ; and, if I saw it clear,
Have then, with equal dignity to his,

—As doth become woman's nobility—
 Replied, and made *his* spirit leap with joy
 And gratitude.

Agläia. Rather would I, by far,
 Clasp, with the closeness of the loving vine,
 Than stand apart, in equal dignity,
 Blending some few far boughs.

Beatrice. But if some fate
 Should all unclasp your fondly twining rings,
 And leave you, unsupported, to fall down,
 And trail on the bare ground?

Agläia. It would be well ;
 —I should the sooner die !

Beatrice. Our talk has grown
 Sadder than it should be, and tears have come,
 —Wondering at their summons—to your eyes.
 Fie on them ! dry them : we will talk of days
 That shall be richest Summer, but to fade
 In the full glory of Life's Autumn sun.
 —Tell me of Maurice, and I, too, will join
 In proud dreams of his future, and of yours.

SCENE VII.

The Spring. Evening. The gradual dusk of Twilight blends the Trees that, with a fringe of dark Woods, encircle a quiet Valley. MAURICE and AGLÄIA pause, listening to one only Nightingale, singing amid the silence.

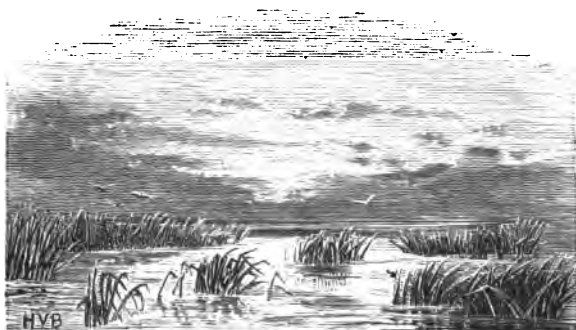
Maurice. That mournful voice !
 So strangely sad ; a sadness not of earth :
 —Perchance 'tis of an Angel lost, that flees
 A little while from tempting, and from sin,
 And, while the world is hushed, sings, all alone,

A few remembered notes of the sweet songs
(Once so familiar in his Heavenly Home),
By the compulsion of the thing, despair,
Changed to these mournful strains. Therefore, perchance
At times there thrills a note, that might have been
Once joyful, but it dies away, afar
Into that long, long cadence that departs
To blend with silence, and the sighing wind.

Agläia. A thought how fearful, but how sadly sweet,
And beautiful !

Maurice. Lo, how the Evening Star
Ariseth faint in the dim hazy blue !
And, as we listen to the melody
That Shakespeare heard, the Nightingale is mute.
—Thus, when the thousand songsters that shall cheer
The day of our bright life, shall cease, the strain
Of evening's bird shall Happiness take up
And blend them all, till Death's calm star arise
And hush it into rest.

Agläia. As this sole bird
In the still eve, thy love sings all alone
To the rapt silence of my heart. If e'er
Its tones should cease, how blank the silence were !



PART II. SCENE I.

A Year has passed. MAURICE, in a small Room in London, looking abstractedly from the window on to a blank wall.

Maurice. I would these fetters of oppressing debt
Weighed not upon me.

I believed, ere this,
I should have been the lord of manors wide,
Withheld from me by the delaying law.
—I know not now :—

I feel a dreariness—
A load that presses on me.

Strange it is,
And new to me this feeling.

[He continues to muse, and, above and around him, in the air and on the earth, rages a conflict terrific and deadly. And still, over it, watch the Angels, as stars above a storm.]

Love. This is most fearful, and of horror full,
Even to an Angel's mind untroubled. Ah,
They press upon him !

Gentleness. See, what agony
Blanches his quivering lip, and carves his face
With long-drawn lines, and makes the sweat run down
As swiftly as the blood. Scarce can he now
Uphold his shield : scarcely his feeble blows
Avail, even for a little, to drive back
The ever-gathering Fiends.

Mercy. Alas for him !
Glide down, my Brother ; ere he fall a prey,
And lose his dear and dearly bought reward.

[STRENGTH, gliding down, encourages the spirit of HAROLD, and returns.]

Love. Now, for a little, are they beaten back,

And he may breathe awhile. Behold, they come,
And their fresh yells and cries announce, I fear,
Some new device and strategy.

Spirit of Harold.

Alas !

No respite ! Not a moment ? Be it so,
I am prepared.—Ah, horror !—Sight that chills
My being into stone ! Where'er I strike
I see my brother's bent and drooping form
As on that day of anguish when he lay
Borne helpless in my arms. The jeering Fiends
Hold him before me, and thus still arrest
My downward stroke. I will draw fast my breath,
And strike unshrinking. Certainly I *know*
It is *not* he.

—Oh, harrowing agony !

IT has not changed into a Fiend, and fled !
But, from the gaping wound slow wells the blood
And the known eyes upturn a ghastly gaze,
Reproachfully, on me ! I scarcely can
Longer endure. Oh, blest relief ! at last
They bear him, moaning, from me, and depart,
And shadowy distance hides them.

Would the note

That bids me close my deadly-wearied eyes
Might sound. Scarce can I stand ; the cruel powers
Of anguish, and great horror, press me still ;
—Scarce can I more endure !

*[A Fiend sounds a trumpet in the distance imitating
the signal.]*

It comes at last !

Most grateful to my spirit over-worn.

[Sleeps. The mutter is heard of a far-reverberating laugh.]

Mercy. Alas, behold how eagerly the Fiends

Gather around the Mortal, and perplex

His 'wildered soul ! There bends DESPAIR, his brow

Fixed, and wan features drawn into one look
 That changes never : there, too, SELF-DECEIT
 Veiling his torments with a hideous smile ;
 There SELFISHNESS, with narrow brow, and eyes
 Cast cunningly around ; and LUST, that through
 His beauteous face betrays a loathsome skull :—
 And hollow-cheeked REMORSE :—and PRIDE, that strives
 To hide the torture-spasms :—all press near—
 Ah, can it be that they shall triumph now ?
 Deserve these bitter vigils and contests
 But this reward ?

Justice. Till when the trumpet ceased
 Had he but stayed, he had not been deceived ;
 His vigilance has failed : the blame is his.

Love. Yet even now the mortal may resist,
 —Even now :—and conquer.

Gentleness. At the spirit's ear
 A Demon whispers sweet delusive dreams :
 Alas ! when he shall wake !

*After long musing and indecision MAURICE starts up,
 and speaks—*

I will at once
 Go forth to where they wait, and meet them. Gone
 Are now those mawkish dreams of morbid minds,
 Those false ideas of honour, and of love
 Towards my fellows. They would ruin me,
 And will, if adverse fate control the cards,
 And throw the die. If deeper I am plunged
 Into despair and debt, it harms but me :
 My friends would frown,—but anger is not grief ;
 And *she* would soon—

Well, I will go.
 “ He either fears his fate too much,
 Or his deserts are small,

Who dares not put it to a touch
To lose or win it all !”

[*Exit.*

Love. I almost seem to have a faint idea
Of what is sorrow,—seeing this !

SCENE II.

A small Bedroom, half lit by the flare of a long-wicked candle. MAURICE, with haggard face, a strange unnatural excitement in his eyes, and with fevered lips, speaking.

Maurice. 'Tis well, 'tis very well :—so large a sum,
And in one night, the first. Now can I meet
The chief, most urgent, of my debts. I hail
The omen ; and, until once more set free,
I will go on. And then, and then, I swear,
Never again to touch the cards or dice !
—Yet *is* this well ? And am I happy ?—Aye,
There's something that will scarce digest, in that
Strange—shall I say that agonised ?—look
Of the poor boy from whom I won :—his start,
When he discovered what the sum he lost.
—Pshaw ! I believe he is, as Wentworth said,
A thorough-paced young gambler, and can act
His part with ease. 'Tis a good deed, if so,
To spoil the spoiler.

—But he seemed so young :—
'Tis hard to think that—

Well, I now have plunged
Into the swift strong current, and must on.
I cannot, if I would, go back.

[*Having tossed off glass after glass of wine, he sinks
into a heavy sleep on the bed.*

SCENE III.

Spirit of Harold (awaking).

'Tis strange. I do not feel, as erst, refreshed:
 There is a trouble in my soul. In dreams,
 I have, once more, tasted of happiness
 So sweet,—so sweet. Thus, to a drowning man,
 Just ere he sinks, appears his happy home,
 Set in the trees, against the pale blue sky,
 Peaceful and fair.

But where are those that still
 Watch, leaning forward, for when they once more
 May swoop towards their prey? The Angels fair,
 Why dwells a mist of pity, and almost
 Of sadness, in their radiant eyes? Before,
 Their smile would cheer me, rising to the fight.
 —Where is my brother?

—Can it be?

—Is *this*,—

The hungry-featured gamester, with dry lips,
 And eyes with fierce excitement wildly bright,
 And form bent forward, eagerly to catch
 The first sight of the falling card :—is this
 He?—must I think faith is not kept in Heaven?
 Forbid it!

Yet why swarm those thronging Fiends
 About him? Why the hellish triumph shot
 In glance of lightning 'neath their thunder brows?

[*The truth is revealed to his mind by an Angel.*

—Is't so? Is't even so? Then must I taste
 Hell's fiercest pangs, ere, shuddering, I am hurled
 Aye to endure them.

Oh, my Brother, thou
 Most loved and watched for,—is it by *my* fault

That these must drag thee Hell-ward ? There shall need
No other torment through eternity
Than this one thought.

Help me, ye Angels fair !

Thou whose eyes beam with MERCY, lo, I cry
Despairing, and in misery, to thee,
Who art so happy, for one grain of help !
Deny me not ! Fallen has my brother's will,
Leaving me powerless !

Thou, O fairest HOPE,
Whose clear remembered face once smiled on me
In old, old times,—turn but once more thy gaze
Toward me,—not for my sake, but to shew
There yet is hope for him ; not all yet lost !
—I thank thee, Spirit ! I am strong again ;
If with a heart more weighted now I fight,
Yet be it with a soul more resolute,
With strong, tense will, and vigil more severe.
—Now is the time to *fight*,—there will be time—
—Aye, there will be *Eternity*—to mourn !

SCENE IV.

MAURICE, *passing an open window where sits AGLAIA, alone,
singing. He pauses to listen.*

SONG.

“ He said, ‘ From forth the opening clouds
The glimmering lightnings part :—
Thus does the silence of thy love
Disclose my inmost heart ! ’
He said, ‘ One star has riven the gloom
From one thin azure line ;
Thus trembles with soft light thy soul
Through Hope’s clear blue, on mine ! ’

“ I answered falteringly, ‘ The dew
 Lies on the early lawn,
 In thin faint lines its fresh pure life
 Toward the hot sun is drawn ; —
 Thus love absorbs a maiden’s soul,
 — Too oft to sink again,
 — Deserted by its waning sun, —
 In cold and mournful rain ! ’

“ He dropped my hand ; a gathering chill
 O’erspread love’s glowing heaven :
 Some jar to love’s frail, subtle chords
 My random touch had given : —
 ‘ You speak old thoughts of mine,’ he said ;
 Alas, ah, vanity !
 The frail, yet fairest, bloom of joys,
 Even as we touch, must die ! ”

Maurice.

What, *love* again ?

Nothing but love ? Methinks a little hate
 Were good, at times, to season it ! ’Tis well ;
 Her love is just that meek and humdrum love
 That varies never. Does not this suffice ?
 Am I not happy then ?

Pshaw ! — Yet, just now,
 I will turn back, I feel a pettish mood
 That craves for something —

Well, I do not feel
 In mood for love and cloying kisses now.
 I will walk through the fern that tints the hill
 Where first we met, and then return to hear
 The gentle voice that once I loved so much,
 — That *now* I love so dearly, I would say.

SCENE V.

MAURICE, in the Park.

Maurice. I cannot grasp it in my mind. It seems Wholly bewildering. When she comes to me, With the fond look that thrilled my being once, And clasps my waist, I feel a coldness strange, My heart almost repels her. Yet I smile And seem the same, and hide it from my mind And hers.

I think I am not well. Aye, that Doth all explain :—these fevered nights that scorch My heart with burning heat, have doubtless marred The clearness of my brain. These pleasant scenes Familiar, and the quiet, and the rest, Will soon restore me, and the mist shall go, And all the landscape of my love appear, Clear in the sunshine.

—Yet 'tis *strange* !

SCENE VI.

London again. A miserable Garret. MAURICE, with unquiet gaze continually turned to the door.

Maurice. There—it is done !
'Tis done ; through my set teeth I hiss, 'tis done !
And—whisper it, my tongue ;—behold me, now,
A forger !—Ship, that, o'er the merry waves,
Wilt scud on gaily, thou shalt bear one heart
Heavier than lead.

—Where are the visions proud,
—Where are the dreams, and high imaginings,
That stirred my heart some few short years ago ?

—Then, o'er men's heads high towering, rocket-like,
 I thought to rise, in splendour, from the earth,
 But now I fall, the poor burnt blackened stick,
 For all to trample. That old dream of love,
 —Where is it now? Coldness at first, and then
 Dislike, and, lastly, loathing, as disease
 O'erspread and scarred its beauty.

When, alas !

She marked the change, more earnest grew her love,
 Fearing I doubted her, but loathing strange
 Grew and increased upon me, till, at last,
 She saw, and shrank away, and grew more cold
 Than I. Of stronger metal made must she
 Who wins my love, and not my fancy, be.
 —Yet sinks my heart with dull and heavy pain
 When I remember the old love that lit
 The world for me.

Farewell ! O pleasant friends,
 Honour, and Love, and noble Self-respect,
 And Peace, and Happiness, and Hope !

Farewell,

My Sister, and my Father old :—how soon
 Will shame and anger take the place of love
 In your undreaming hearts ! There is not one,
 In all the world, will cherish still my name
 For the old days, or say one word, when Spite,
 With cat-eyes gleaming, hisses forth her tale.
 —Not one,—Yet one there was, but he—that I
 Should e'er rejoice to say it !—sleepeth sound,
 Too sound even to arouse him at my name
 Blackened and cursed. Drink-Fiend, I bid thee come
 And dull my sense ; long has the time been past,
 When aught beside could hold Remorse at bay.

SCENE VII.

*A bright Summer day. The wide Ocean, calm and beautiful.
No land in sight. MAURICE, on the Ship's Deck.*

Maurice. Onward we press, and part the wine-dark sea
With onyx-bar of white.

An idle thought !

Fitter to say,—as on this ocean calm
Steadily glides the vessel with swift keel,
So, on my life's unbroken future years,
Swiftly I speed, and aye my guilty course
Leaves trouble tossing in its wake. To me,
What is it that the sky and sea are fair
And beautiful, as 'twere their marriage morn ?
What is't to me ? I—how I loved them, once !
But now my dull heart has no response quick
Unto their beauty. All is dark to me.
The Present, and the Future, and the Past,
Close, as the waters round a sinking man,
Blank, horrible, and wan. Death lurks for me,
As lurks a murderer in a darksome wood ;—
—But I can seek him, and compel him forth,
From where he hides, to face me openly.
—'Tis well. I have that remedy, at least,
Ever at hand.



PART III. SCENE I.

America. MAURICE *writing.* *Two Years have passed.*

Maurice. I am *so* tired. I am worn and ill,
And writing, writing, day, and much of night,
O'er-wearies me. Yet can I live by this,
Yes, and put something by. Could I have hoped
For *any* work, a stranger, in strange land ?
Do I repine ? No, but I feel so worn ;—
—I would there were one creature in the world
'That cared for me, would miss, or grieve for me,
If I should leave this sad world's dismal stage,
More than for a dead dog, that lieth stark
To rot beside the road.

[*The door opens, and an Old Man enters.*

More work ? Well, well,
Grist to the mill ! But I had hoped my task
Was over for to-night. What would you, Sir ?
Old Man. I come from England, Sir. More closely look,
Perhaps your memory may recall my face.

Maurice. It does. There was a time when burning shame
Had tingled through my soul to look on you.
'Tis past. What would you, Sir ?

Old Man. Your Father—

Maurice. —Aye,
You bear his curse. I wonder, can it add
Hopelessness to *my* heart !

Old Man. He called for me,
In his last hour, and, with faint earnest voice,
'Trembling with frantic fondness, spoke of you,
And blessed you, in weak accents, ere he died.

—Aye, 'twas a broken heart, and yet, and yet
Even to the last the thin-haired aged man
Strove fondly to defend you—

Ah, you smile !

Yet, hardened wretch, I have reserved a shaft
Would rive most hearts. Your sister, pale and wan
And dying in the birth of her first child,
Had but few words, and little breath, to spare,
But some of these she wasted upon you,
And to them added tears,—too precious pearls
To cast before the swine !

Why do you fix
That vacant smile on me ? Have you no sense,
—No feeling left ?—

[MAURICE *falls heavily on the floor. The visitor
rings. A Servant enters.*

Your master is not well—

Attend to him.

SCENE II.

Spirit of Harold. These troubles that have come,
And more that follow, in continuous ranks,
May either prove allies or enemies.
My Brother, if that thou art silver, then,
This fierce fire shall consume the dross, and leave
Thee pure and white ; if that thou art but lead,
Then thou wilt calcine by degrees, to dust,
Worthless and dull. That this may not be so,
Be it my part to watch and strive. Perchance
Thus I may yet unclasp the deadly snake
That found me, wrapped in that most fatal sleep,
And wreathed him round my heart.

SCENE III.

An Inn. MAURICE *draws a Stranger aside from the fire.*

Maurice.

Sir, I once knew,

Long time ago, the girl you named but now.

Will you come with me to my home? For there

We can be quiet and can talk of her:—

She was my little playmate; I would hear

More of her death—and how—and why—she died.

Stranger. I will go with you, Sir, and tell you that
Which you desire.

SCENE IV.

MAURICE *and the Stranger.* *Wine on the table.*

Maurice.

Oh! 'tis seven years at least,

Since I set foot on the old land.

Stranger.

So long?

Nay, then, indeed, you were but childish loves.

Maurice. But so. Yet any tidings of old days

Are dear, when Time has set a sea between

Our fresh child-feelings and our later years.

—You do not drink. But, to that little girl,

The child Aglāia—as I saw her last—

What envious worm the pensive snowdrop nipped,

And laid in the cold ground?

Stranger.

No one can tell.

At least, I never heard a reason given.

Some four years back, both happiness and health

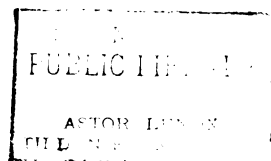
Were hers, it seems; but, all at once, a change

Came over her; scarce ever did she smile

Who was so cheerful: and she grew to be

Thoughtful and listless. One dear friend she had





With whom at times she loved to talk. But much
 She loved, they say, to saunter by herself
 O'er the fern hills, and through the silent vales.
 —Once, only once, I saw emotion strange
 Disturb her quiet :—

Sir, do you attend,

Or do I tire you ?

Maurice. No, no, no—Speak on !

Your glass stands empty, Sir.

Stranger. One spake, by chance,
 Of an absconded swindler, who had fled,—
 A forger, if that I remember right,—
 Three years ago,—or, let me think,—

Maurice (leaning forward). And she—

Stranger. Arose, and walking up to where he sat,
 With eyes agleam with bright indignant fire,
 Looked in his face, and said, “ My father’s friend
 Was he of whom you spake. The whispers vile
 Of calumny must needs be hushed beneath
 This roof at least ! ”

Still with fixed look on him
 She glared, her eyes shot lightning, then she turned,
 And, with slow step, moved stately from the room.

Maurice. And this—was this the slight and feeble
 girl

Whose tamely gentle spirit wearied—

Sir,

My thoughts were wandering—pardon me.

Stranger. A change

Came over her bright life, but no one marked
 In her large eyes the twilight stealing on,
 Herald of Death’s calm night. I quote her words.
 But I have since been told she loved to read
 Of those who died when they were young. She oft
 Would seek for books that told the symptoms sure

Of fell Consumption, and, when questioned why,
She smiled and said that time would shew. No pain
Of mind or body seemed to harass her,
Calmness was hers that grew to happiness,
When it was known that she must die. At last,
When all around were grouped, in silent awe,
To wait the awful guest, she seemed to feel
A strange fantastic interest in the fate
Of that same swindler, and she said that time
Would clear the mystery, and would reveal
Some great and noble motive 'neath the veil
That hid it ; and, in other things than these,
She said, were causes hid, that she not yet
Could understand. 'Then, it would seem, her mind
Wandered, and she spake strangely of some one
Who, having thrown a tender flower away,
Might turn again to seek it, and might grieve
To find it gone ; and said that he must come
To where it grew more worthy of his love.
Thus, talking wildly, though in lowest tones,
The sudden shade of death o'erpassed her face,
And stayed—

Maurice. Sir, I entreat you to be gone ;
For my excuse, I tell you I am he,
That rascal swindler, that you named but now,
And that I broke Aglāia's heart.

Stranger. Had I
Known this, I would have herded with the swine,
Rather than housed with you. Aye, to this end,
The Lady Beatrice impressed my mind
With this sad tale, ere for this port I sailed.
Sir, fare you ill !

[*Exit.*

Maurice. I am as some poor child
Benighted, in a lonely wood, who runs,
And cries, then stops, and turns, and still

Goes on, he knows not whither, but with vague
And heavy fear upon him.

Where shall I
Turn me ? What shall I do ?

Avenge, avenged,
Agläia, oh, my darling ! Yet still more
To be avenged on your destroyer ! Sleep
Is yours, untroubled ; but the Nightmare, Life,
Horribly weighs upon me still, and I
Cannot awake.

Oh, peaceful early days,
Father, and loving sister, and child-wife
Of boyhood's dream, ye knew not, when your hands
Played with my clustering curls, that the blue eyes
That with frank gladness met your smile, would all
In agony refuse to yield a tear
To mourn you, broken-hearted, through his act
You loved too dearly.

Well, you are near Heaven,
Where devils may not come to torture you,
And that is earnest / shall not be there.
Perchance, when gazing upward from the pit,
Deep, horrible, and black, I shall behold
You floating past above in light serene,
—I wonder, shall I curse you ?

Would I might
Go mad : or shall I rush, uncalled, to doom,
That Hate may quench this fire-heat of Remorse ?

SCENE V.

The next Evening. MAURICE in his Room.

Maurice. The throbbing heartache has its crisis passed,
There comes a lull. Ah, yet there may be deeds

That I may do. And, though I work alone,
 Shut close in a dark cave, I yet may toil
 My way to light.

Though happiness no more,
 Yet a more quiet pain may come ; mayhap
 Some stains may be erased, and my name writ
 More fairly on Time's page, more free from blot.
 It shall be so, and I——

[*Enter a Servant with a letter.*

Why, what is this ?

—From my employer.—

So, the game is played !

Well now avails my purpose still to hoard,
 And make some poor amends for evil done.
 —'Tis well. 'Tis best ! Now, Hope, farewell, and oh,
 Would I could banish with thee, Faith !

My tale

The angry stranger has disclosed, and now
 Vainly should I employment seek, to bring
 But common food and clothes.

My heart grows hard,

I will not, cannot, and do not, believe
 That this is mercy :—it is cruelty.
 Why should blow after blow as quickly come
 As when the axe, swift-flashing, smiteth keen
 Upon a tree that firmly stands awhile,
 Then quivers ; bends ; and, greatly crashing, falls ?
 Thus do I stand no longer. I *have* stood
 Believing 'gainst belief, and against hope,
 Still hoping : now this ends it. Hope and trust
 Are dead. Respite I might have had for thought !
 And from the gall-grapes tonic wine to have pressed ;
 But trouble swift, unrest, and grim Despair
 Hunt me so hard, and follow me with stride
 Persistent, giving me no pausing time,

That, as the deer pursued by circling wolves,
I will leap o'er the precipice, and thus
Scape *them*, at least.

—Yet what if, after all,
They should steal round, and find me at the base,
And claim me for their everlasting prey?

SCENE VI.

MAURICE *leaving his Room. He turns again to look at it*

Maurice. As one that, after many toilsome miles,
Draws near to home, and walks more leisurely,
And half enjoys the weary, heavy steps
That yet remain, because he knows how soon
Waits rest delicious, dearer for the toil ;—
Thus is it now with me. The room looks still,
The room where I have worked, by night and day,
So many weary hours, that now seem thrown
Back into the dim region of the past,
And clothed with something of its gray.

There lies
What I have pinched to save. Those I have wronged
May credit my intent.

Now I depart.
My preparations are but few and scant,
And little carriage need encumber me
Upon this journey.

Strange, how many, now,
In the large world, are rising, full of peace,
To daily labour : or, the day's toil past,
Press downy beds in grateful rest. Of some
The mellow wedding-bells proclaim the joy ;
And some, by weeping friends, are borne to rest,
Honoured and loved. Thus, in the busy hive,

Each finds, or brings, some honey. But, for me,
A hapless drone, the ready stings protrude,
And homeless, friendless, foodless, I must face
The wintry storm.

—Yet once, in other days—

—Why muse I thus? What matters it? My life
Waned into Autumn ere its Summer came;
All that is past: why dig it from its grave?
All that is past. A quiet sense of rest
Dwells on my soul. As one who shuts his books,
Some toilsome task complete, and, light of heart,
Turns from them, looking forward to a long
Sweet holiday;—so do I turn me now
To where my trouble shall call loud indeed,
Ere I awake.

Come, Peace, and deep Repose!

My heart is at dead calm.

My darling ones—

What of them?—Aye, at times mine aching tooth
Will bite upon that crust.

Hence, thoughts of care!

Oh room, I leave you, to return no more!

SCENE VII.

The Spirit of Harold. Little did I heed
That, thick as volumed smoke across the vast
Fire-vanquished Prairie, came the Fiends, that Hell
Seemed to have given up her host entire
For this one battle; nor the fearful cries,
Nor the keen blows; nor flames and hellish breath;
Nor the wide-flaming sky, o'er which, at times,
Flashes of blackness shut and opened, through
The lightning never ending, that on me

Seemed to pour out its rage. Yet in me strength
 Ever increased, and the grim hosts of Hell
 Recoiled with silent anguish from the fight,
 Wreathing, as smoke, away.

Again they swept
 Toward me with harrowing cries.

But ah ! behold,
 Strength failed me utterly. I fell to earth,
 Helpless against their hate.

My Brother, ah !
 Thy will forsook me, and the dark array
 Had their way with thee ! Now, in mad despair,
 Thou art gone forth to dare eternal woe !

Yet do I follow thee. A voice there is,
 A sweet low whisper that not all is lost,
 Not utterly.

And if it be indeed,
 Even in Hell, I'll guard thee, to my power,
 Against the Demons, and will strive to cause
 Their fury to be wreaked on me, instead !

[An Angel of Mercy, gliding down, has whispered to him.]

SCENE VIII.

*A black and vast Forest, above a moon-pathed Lake. A dark
 Pine bending down even with the water. Upon it, set in
 the line of the moonlight, stands MAURICE.*

Maurice. There is a flutter in the leaves to-night,
 A strange and most perpetual murmuring sound,
 As though the spirits of the ancient trees
 Knew, and in horror whispered of the deed
 I purpose.

How the quiet moonlight falls
 Slanting along a thin branch here and there,
 Or straggling down into the deep, black shade,
 In broken silver. Here, at least, is peace,
 The scarce apparent ripple of the lake
 Seems to enhance the stillness, and to tell
 Of rest at hand.

Strange, how the beaten light
 In white straight path seems still to follow me,
 And point toward me, as the calm rays said,
"Thou shalt not do it in the dark!"

Amen !

Even so. Here in this path of purest light
 I will plunge down, and die.

Soon, in this lake
 So hushed and solemn, I shall float, as still
 As a dead branch that quits its hold and falls
 When all the winds are lulled.

Those whom I love
 Have perished in an early frost of death,
 And, as a last leaf on a silent tree,
 That sees its sisters sleeping and at rest
 Beneath it far, and, feeling lonely there,
 Uncclasps its hold, and flutters gently down,
 Craving their sleep to share :—even so will I
 Bid my farewell to all the cares of life,
 The ills, and turmoils, and complexities ;
 The old heart-trouble, and the coming blank
 Of Winter, desolate with frost and snow,
 And bare of flowers.

.
 A hapless, helpless fly
 Entangled in the web of circumstance,
 Whose struggles but the closer seem to weave
 The meshes round my feet.

Come then, O Death,
 Thou grim old spider, clasp thy bony arms
 Around me closely, whisper in mine ear,
 And still my throes, then bear me swathed away
 To some remotest grave.

Yes, my resolve
 Holds firm :—and if a tyrant God there be
 Who planned this world a web of snares and death
 For feeble mortals whom, unasked, He made,
 I will advance, with fearless gaze, and firm,
 * Arraign His act, defy His utmost ire,
 And will of right demand to be returned
 To nothing, whence, unasking, I was called
 To face this strife unequal !

*The Angel of Mercy, laying her hand upon the arm of
 the Angel of Justice —*

He but spake
 In the distempered madness of Despair !

Maurice (after a silence). For the last time I hear your
 pleasant voice,
 Oh ever-whispering leaves ! For the last time
 The moon's untroubled beam quivers, for me,
 Upon the sleeping bosom of the lake. Farewell !

*[He plunges into the lake, and disappears. Over the
 dark, troubled spot where he sank, the broken moon-
 beams gather again, and trembling, blend into a
 glittering path of light as before.]*

* St. Matthew xxii. 12.

SCENE IX.

MAURICE, *on a bed of leaves in an Indian Cabin. A young Chief sitting beside him.*

Maurice. Tell me again this tale, stranger than dreams.

Indian. The Chiefs around the council-fire were met,
And it was evening, and the pipe went round.
There came a silence, for the war-path soon
The Chiefs would tread ; and so, in many a lodge
The squaws must pine, and look for meat in vain.
And yet, each longed to show the scalps, and bring
Treasure into his lodge. There was a pause :
The flame rose brightly, and on faces grave,
And on the rising smoke-wreaths curling, cast
A ruddy light.

Suddenly, from the trees,
Out from their darkness into the red light,
Came one, a pale face, but of face more pale
Than any that the summers yet have brought
Into these woods.

Amid the Chiefs he stood,
And spake not, but with earnest, steadfast gaze
To me he beckoned, and drew toward the wood.
And something bade me follow.

To the side
Of the big water did he lead me on,
Then sank away, as smoke, into the air ;
Then did I see my brother sink beneath
The water, and I plunged, and bare him safe
To where he lies.

Maurice. The stranger must have slipped
Into the forest, while you watched the lake.

Indian. White Eagle's eyes are sharp and very clear,
They are not shut when he is not alone.

Maurice. Know you at all, or can you guess, who was
Your guide?

Indian. It was a Manitou.

Maurice. Had I
A guardian Angel, surely, from my side,
Long since, he must have fled!

Indian. Something that lights
My brother's face is like the stranger's look,
Faintly, at times.

My brother needs repose.

[*The Indian draws a blanket over MAURICE, and
leaves the lodge.*

SCENE X.

The same. MAURICE, *alone.*

Maurice. So, when I'd laid me down to sleep, they came
And roughly woke me; and, with cruel care,
Pointed the weary journey still to take.
—Can there be aught on earth for me to do?
These sin-defiled hands would surely stain
A pure and holy work.

It *must* be love,
A *Father's* love, that heeds us. I had plunged
Into Eternity uncalled, but He
Has set my feet on life's long road again,
Where thither points the finger post of Time.
—Can there be hope? And is our God indeed
The God of love? I had despaired of this.
Whisper, strange Guardian, if thou canst hear,
Thou who didst save this weed of life uptorn,
And cast aside to die;—Is there yet hope?
Is there a God of love?

[*Silence awhile.* Then MAURICE *speaks.*

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Is't possible ?

I seemed to hear a voice, as faint and low
As hushed night breezes in the withered bents,
Yet clear withal as the long thrilling note
That Philomela loves.

Yes, it was real,

It seemed to speak not to the ears : it spake
As to the finer senses of the soul.
And, strange to say, it half-familiar seemed
Though memory labours for its track in vain.
—Oh withered heart ! Oh weary sense ! What tone
Of old dear days thrills through you, even now ?



INTERLUDE.

CHORUS OF ANGELS.

Father, scorned and slighted,
Dost Thou see Thy child?
Life's fair promise blighted,
Once that gaily smiled.
Hope, and strength and gladness,
Spent, all spent and gone:
Dull despair and madness
Claim him for their own!

All the joy and laughter
Spent, and hushed, and dead:
All the deep peace after,
Spent:—for ever fled!
Youth's quick faith and pleasure,
Energy and glow,
All that first rich treasure
Spent—and nought to shew!

We, Thy Sons, Thine Angels,
We, the elder host,
We would sing evangels
To the lone and lost;
We, Thy children, Father!
Safe within Thy Home,
Therefore yearn the rather
Over those that roam.

Lo, a hunger ever
Gnaweth at his soul;
Earthly banquets never
Can its want control;

Ah, that want, God-given,
Child of the Divine,
Asks the Bread of Heaven,
Not the husks of swine !

Father ! art Thou calling,
Calling home the lost ?
Is Thy sunshine falling
On the winter frost ?
Father, look upon him,
Wandering, and beguiled ;
Thou hast not foregone him,
Still is he Thy child.

Father ! There is silence,
Deep, and still, and dread ;
Earnest, eager silence,
Till the word be said :
SAVED ! He is forgiven !
Million harps should raise,
Pealing through high Heaven,
Ecstasies of praise.



PART IV. SCENE I.

Some Months have passed.

1st Angel. Voices of earth come tranquilly to-night,
The Christmas bells are ringing o'er the snow,
That, white, untrodden, as the coming year,
Lieth unstained, and pure.

2nd Angel. How that one church
Sings to itself a quiet song alone !
Dim hills surround it. List—how sweet the sound !
Even in a fallen world, music abides
And sights yet lovely, yet unmarred by sin.

1st Angel. Behold, an Angel heavenward floats from
earth
On those clear tones, and a most glorious song
Soars from his lips, praising the Saviour, for
A soul, a soul redeemed !

3rd Angel. Lo, he ascends
Higher and higher ; and more near and clear
Rise the seraphic strains !

Oh, welcome thou,
Undying spirit, snatched from endless woe,
For ever our companion dear to be !

Angel, ascending towards them—

Saved, saved ! The word is said ; the word of might ;
Chaos is broken up, and there is Light !
And the new world, in fresh creation clad,
Smiles in the blue ethereal sky of Love !
Rejoice, ye stars, and sweetly sing for joy,
Ye Angel sons of God !

Angels (answering). Glory to Him !

Saved, saved ! When the world's end shall come,
 Another Angel-smile shall rapturous gleam
 From a world-wearied face !

Glory to God,
 To Him, the oft-provoked, yet bearing still,
 And, in His pity, saving !

The Angel—joining them from beneath—

Praise His Name !

The wanderer has returned : the Spirit pale
 Has his desired reward : through endless years,
 Through space as infinite, his charge shall reign,
 Blest, ever blest !

1st Angel. And he— ?

4th Angel. Leave all with God !

The lost is saved, is saved ! He doth repent
 Sincerely, and in humble faith ! Behold,
 The falling Star has paused upon its way
 To black oblivion ; and, for aye, shall shine
 Amid the radiant clusters of high Heaven,
 Rejoicing many with its beams !

*[The Hymn of Praise is taken up by Angel above
 Angel, as it ascends, till it bursts into a radiance
 of song around the Throne of God.]*

SCENE II.

MAURICE, *standing near his old Room.*

Maurice. There is no moon. The night is very dark,
 And one by one the rude rain striketh down
 The scarcely clinging leaves. At times I hear
 A heavier splash or patter on some stone,
 Above the dreamy murmuring. How dim,
 Shadowy and weird the house appears, that yet

Has nothing changed, through all the changing scenes
That so have changed me, since I saw it last.
—Again I turn from it, and think that I
Shall see it never more.

Father, above !

This proud heart is more humble now, this stone
Is somewhat softened. O'er the icy ground
The thaw has stolen ; in Thy tender love,
Let it not freeze again !

How blind was I

Then, when I thought my sight most clear ! Ah, now
A little do I see how less than least
I know, and knew before. A little now,
Though dimly, I can read Thy ways. My strength,
Wherein I trusted, Thou hast shown to be
Most utter weakness : from my evil, Thou
Hast worked Thy good. Those broken hearts ! From this
Thy love has ordered that I might alone
Be left ; alone, entirely ; no one near
On whose mine arm might lean, that thus at last
I might look round, and see my need of Thee,
And broken-hearted seek Thee, and so come
Trembling and lonely, heavy-laden, worn
And weary, unto Thee !

Aye, He, who ate

With publicans and sinners, will not spurn
Poor blackened me !

He sent His Messenger,

His kind Earth-angel, to bind up the bruised,
Who told me it was injury to doubt
That mercy infinite to me would reach.
He told of One who came to seek the lost ;
He told me many things, and gave my heart
The little glimmer, that lifts faintly, now,
The folding black. Now, with my Father's help,

I will henceforward strive to humbly trust,
Where I not understand ; and as a child
Will strive to be, yet wiser than a child,
Knowing myself scarce wise as one.

Not yet

Can I look up to Heaven, with the love
The heart should bear for Home, nor wholly am
Weaned from the world and sin. But He has said
He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench
The smoking flax. Patiently let me strive,
And He will help me faltering, and my toil,
Earnest, though long, by little will approach
My tottering footsteps to my Father's door.
—Alas, maybe this glow of gratitude
Will pass, and leave me dark and cold ! Yet still
Let me look up ; a Star will surely gleam
From opening clouds.

—And is there joy among
The Angels, or do they lament that soon
Repentance, fleeting,—but a meteor gleam,
No steady star,—shall leave the night more dark
For that brief light ?

—Saviour, in Thee I trust !
Thy grace shall be sufficient, and Thy strength
Is perfect made in weakness.

Now, again

Farewell, for aye, oh quiet House !

I go

To England, there to hire some little cot
Near where *they* lie ; and by my sweat to earn
Wherewith to live ; yea, hoarding patiently,
Far as I may, to render back their due
To those whom I have wronged. I do not think
That I shall all unaided bear the brunt
Of old and new temptations.

SCENE III.

England. Spirit of HAROLD alone, watching.

Harold. How strange appear to me these vacant hours
After the ceaseless conflict ! God has made
At first the path smooth for his tottering feet
Till he some strength attains.

Now can I muse
In quiet, and the beauteous sights and sounds
Of God's fair world can drink in eagerly,
Preparing for Eternity's long drought.

The storm,
Solemn and grand, is sweeping o'er the woods,
In its wild pride. I fancy it, sometimes,
The mighty organ-music of the skies :
The deepest notes may be too vast and grand
For mortal sense to hear : the muttering peal
May be as middle tones : the lightning keen
As though the high sharp notes, too fine and thin
For our gross hearing ; thus they gleam, to sight,
A pointed, gathered flash of instant fire.

—What form is this, that slowly draweth nigh ?
To sight, a woman's, but the Fiend-mark stamped
Upon her brow.—I will be on my guard.

Woman. Thou idle watching fool, cease from thy toil
For one who through Eternity must hate
Thee, and thy love ! Come thou and wend with me,
I have a merry story for thine ear.

Harold. Fiend-woman, hence ! I will not slack my watch ;
Waste not thy wiles, for I am vigilant.

Woman. Wilt thou not stir ? Then I will bide with thee
And we will watch together.

Harold. Hence ! Away !
Laugh not upon me with that fearful mirth !

Woman. Hear, and confess that goodly cause have I
For mirth. A mother was I. Question not
The reason, but, as the dull months went by,
Hate grew in me to Father and to Child.
—One Summer morn—Dost hear? One Summer morn
I took my Babe, my tender, helpless Babe,
Into a lonely wood, where none might see,
And there I laid him in a narrow grave
Where he lay smiling at me ; and he clapped
His chubby hands, and crowed right merrily :—

Harold. Oh, horror ! Tell no more ! Thou canst not
speak !

Woman.—Then I pushed down a mound of choking
earth :

Thus, with my foot :—I pushed down the soft earth.
And I remember I saw one small hand
Struggling above it.—But I heaped it o'er,
And, when a faint cry rose from underneath,
I stamped the soft earth down, that heaved and moved,
As though the life beneath it stirred !

Harold. Away !

Turn not on me that look of Hell's despair ;
Incarnate devil must thou be !

Woman. —Yet why
Did that small hand struggle above the ground ?
I see it now ! There was a tiny scratch
Upon it, that I knew !

Harold. Hence, Fiend ! Away !

Woman. So little and so white ! Oft had it pressed
My mother-bosom !—But I pushed down earth,
And covered it !

Harold. Oh, woman, pray that God
May wipe this horror from thy bloody heart !

Woman. I have essayed to pray :—but—would you think ?
That little hand seems large enough to hide

The wide Heaven from me, and it spreads between
 Me and the God of Mercy :—struggling still,
 And fat and wax-like as I saw it,—when
 The heaped earth I pushed down, and turned my head,
 And stamped on the soft mould !

Harold.

Ah me, I seem

In Hell, seeing the deadly agony
 That doth contort thy face ! Leave me ! Alas,
 I cannot, would that I could, counsel thee !

Woman. There are no counsels now, that little hand
 Holds mercy from me. Oh, thou Fiend-God, give
 Me back oblivion ! Give me crumbling death !
 Annihilation ! Ashes !

Harold.

She has gone

And the wild shrieking whirlwind, that bends down
 Tall masts beneath the waves, is music sweet,
 To that shrill harrowing cry.

— And must I be

As she ? and shall Despair force Blasphemy
 From my parched, frenzied tongue ?

If this be so,

Yet through the wailing shall one song of praise
 Rise, for my brother has been saved from woe
 That one day must be mine, though now, it seems,
 I cannot image it.

For ever, Hell !

They say our eyes must still be open there,
 Nor "tired eyelids upon tired eyes"
 Shut from the seared gaze for a little while
 The Demons, and the Damned : the endless waste
 Black and sulphureous of the dark abode,
 Lest in our fancy we awhile might roam
 To old remembered scenes and faces dear.
 They say our weary wings must ever beat
 About the dark walls of the horrid pit,

Nor rest, save in the sea, that burns beneath,
Of liquid fire.

—Dear things to me were peace
And lovely forms and faces, and sweet tones,
And rest,—for evermore to me denied.
And those I love will vainly seek for me,
Hereafter, in the Happy Land.

The Fiends
And Demon-spirits oft would come to me,
And tell these fearful horrors, to o'er-wear
With the fierce torture-pangs that rack the mind,
My watching patience.

But one earnest gaze
On my repenting brother, nerves again
My heart to bear its dread expectancy
And all its present pains.

SCENE IV.

*England. A desolate and small Cottage, without a fire, in
December.*

Maurice (alone). Hunger, and cold, and loneliness ; and
chill
Averted looks ; or, worse, the garrulous
Busy officiousness of vulgar minds,
That were not of my level once ; all these,
And Memory, as a Prairie, fire-o'erswept,
And failing heart and hope ; and lesser ills,
As pain of body ;—these show that the trap
Of sin, so easy to be entered, turns
Sharp spikes to tear us, seeking to escape.

I have no rock to lean on, no support,
And sometimes does Despair draw near to me,
And all seems black beneath his heavy wings,

And peevish anger and repinings rise
Against my God, and half rebellious grows
My heart, and seems to harden, though I know
That He is just, or 'twere impossible
He could be God.

Yet does the way seem hard,
So hard ! of late repentance. One would think
Smoother and easier it might well be made
For a poor wanderer, setting steps towards home.

—Ah, God, forgive me, that I thus repine !

Even to my dark mind, when I reflect,
Thy ways are just ! That I have made myself,
How should I unmake, with an easy sigh ?
Repentance that has thews and sinews, will
Yet, through ten thousand obstacles, press on.
—Fit that the toil to win that high reward
Should greater be to me, than unto those
Who turned not from the narrow way, to tread
In the rank herbage of luxurious sin,
And came but back because the nettles stung.
Now to me striving to do right, I know
Troubles are but the chastenings of Love.
Shall I at these rebel ? Rather will I
Who, in self-chosen darkness, long have pined,
Still lightward humbly strive, assured that He
Who gave the yearning, will not let it die,
But, by degrees, shed full His living light
Upon the sickly plant, yellowed, so long,
In the dark vault of sin and misery.

SCENE V.

A Street in London. Two Gentlemen walking together.

First Gent. Young Maurice Harcourt? Yes, I've heard
of him

—Is he hung yet?

Second Gent. Not quite so bad as that.

First Gent. 'Twas he absconded some few years ago,
With a black mark against him. Eh?

Second Gent. The same.

Well, the young cousin that won Hartly Hall
And all its goodly rentage from him,—in
That famous lawsuit ;—broke his worthy neck
After the fierce wild beast so many men
And dogs conspire to kill,—the dangerous hare.
No will was left, and thus the Hall, and eke
The lordly income, fell to that same youth
Hight Maurice Harcourt.

First Gent. What a windfall ! How,
Will he return, think you?

Second Gent. Some time, it seems,
He has been back in England, labouring
For bread, upon the land which now is his.
He went at once to him, his injured man,
Who, (told his tale,) refused to prosecute,
And I have heard that, being thus let free,
He gave some petty store, that he had saved,
Among his former dupes, and bade them think
That his one object through his life would be
To do them right.

First Gent. I fancy that this news
Will change his tune, and that he may, perchance,
Depart again, to where he can enjoy
His luck, away from tiresome memories,

And claims that nigh would drain it. How think you?
Will't not be so?

Second Gent. Already has he paid,
Not waiting any claims, all dues in full,
With all the interest : and where kind Death
Had blurred the books, and had the debts confused,
He spared no pains till he found out the heirs.
Even to the fools he ruined with the cards,
He has restored in full his gains. And so,
Besides a home, and some few hundred pounds
Per ann., there's nothing left.

First Gent. What a vast fool !

Second Gent. Well, after all, in this wise world, I think,
Maybe, some greater fools might yet be found,
Although we can't expect all men to reach
Our wisdom's standard !

First Gent. One, I know, at least,
Not very far from me.

Second Gent. Hallo ! Hallo !
Why, what's the matter now ? I called you wise,
Certainly that might warrant what you say !
But that's enough. You are to dine with me ;
We'll save our quarrels for our wine.

SCENE VI.

MAURICE *by his Fireside.*

Maurice. I feel the bliss of earnest gratitude
Thrill through my being. When I thought the storm
Must ever beat my wrecked and shattered bark,
To find this quiet haven where its sails,
Tattered and torn, may droop in peace, and rest
Calmly reflected in the tranquil mere !

God's ways are not as our ways. I had thought
The weight of debt and toil must added be
To that of dull remorse and pain through life.
But now, to every wronged, complete amends,
—So far as may be—have I fully made.
And in this quiet spot my life may pass,
Aye, in this vale, clasped round with woods of doves ;
Streaked with the grey gleam of the winding Wye,
Nightingale-haunted ; gold-gorse-hilled, king-clad
With purple heather, vocal made around
With blackbirds' flutings, thrushes' songs ; all sounds
Tuned perfect, from the deep vast thunder-roar,
To thinnest whisper of the low grass, gemmed
With sapphire violets, and with opal dew :—
Here, where all things are dear,—and dearest far
The yew-tree-sentinelled, gray, quiet tower
That watches o'er their slumber whom—

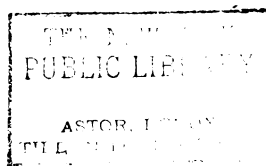
Aye, here,

I may repose ; and wait, in quiet grief,
My time appointed.

Happiness, for earth,
Is lost : I would not call it from their graves,
Even if I could. But I will pass my days,
—If that I may,—in knitting up the sleeve,
Ravelled, of care : in speaking of His ways
To the poor wanderer : in giving bread
To sunk-eyed hunger ; clothes to those who feel
Keen winter through their rags : and kindly words
And helping to the orphan, and to her
Whose life is widowed.

Thus, to hearts from which
Happiness has but strayed, I will essay
To bring it back, and watch the light of smiles
Unseam the weary brow ; the sunny glow
Steal o'er the mist of grief ; and take delight





To give the boon that must not be for me,
At least on earth.

 This was my Saviour's work,
Unworthy am I that it should be mine !

An Angel pausing above—

Rest, weary soul, shall greet thee ; aye, and joy,
In this thy labour !

 As some little child
That, having lost his treasure, turns to aid
His sister in like grief, and, in the search,
Happens unthinking on his own, as well,
—Thus shall it be with thee !

 Thine shall be, now,
The peace that passeth understanding ; aye,
Now and for ever !



PART V. SCENE I.

Twenty Years have passed. MAURICE dying.

Maurice. After the rainy day
The murky clouds drifted from off the blue,
And sunlight smiled upon the weeping fields.
—I feel my end is nigh ; yet, strange to say,
My mind is clear, and more of strength I feel
Than for some days has been my lot.

My thoughts
Are lost in wonder when my Father's love
They seek to realise. I long to quit
My bonds and soar to Him ; and pour my soul
As a libation at *His* feet, who sought
The strayed, the lost, and brought it home.

For me,
For me—even me—for me, so vile, so black,
Eternal joy, and Angels for my peers,
Heaven for my lasting home, and God Himself
To wipe away all stains of earthly grief
From these dim eyes, which are o'erflowing now,
With deep, deep love to Him !

What is this change ?
What Angel-faces glimmer on my sense ?
Father ! Aglăia ! Sister ! can this be ?
Brother, where art thou ? Ah, can this be Death ?
Rather Death's end. Aye,

Blessed are the dead ;
—For they rest from their labours. [*Dies.*

Angel. And their works
Do follow them !

SCENE II.

Spirit of Harold. The night is black, yet star-crowned
Angel-forms

Shed brightness o'er the house wherein he lies,
For whom so long and fondly I have watched.
Now is my watching done, and, God be praised,
Joy, ending not, is his.

Ere from his eyes
Earth's film had fallen, I left him, lest his soul
Should recognise me.

I will stand aside,
And hide me in this dark and leafy bower.
I would not see his look of Angel-bliss
Darken to dreadful sternness, when it lit
On me, his brother,—lost,—yet loving him,
With love such as no spirit glad and bright
Can e'er, I think, surpass.

He will not know,
Doubtless, of this my sacrifice for him ;
—And it were better so, lest some dim pain
Might cast a shadow o'er the sunshine pure
Of his full joy.

At least, to my weak mind
It seems it would be so with me.

SCENE III.

The Village. Two Women at a Cottage Door.

1st Woman. Ah well, no doubt he did a deal o' good,
Although he didn't send the coals my way,
When neighbour Edmonds last had hern. Ah well,
I always said that he forgot it, else

H

I'm sure I should 'a had 'em. So he's dead !
God help us ! Well, there's no one left behind
To fret for him !

2nd Woman. No one to fret for him ?
There'll be an empty place by many a hearth,
Where want or trouble is, or by the bed
Of Death, or sickness, or wherever words
Of kindness, or of good advice, might call
Sin's wretched victim back.

No one to fret ?
There won't be half so many fret for us,
When we die !

1st Woman. Ah, you talk uncommon fine !
But there ain't none *related* like, I mean,
That 'ull be missing him.

2nd Woman. Well, I don't think
They'd love him more than I ! Who brought
My husband to leave off the hateful drink,
And be the best man woman ever had ?
Who helped my brother and his wife to go,
Comfortable, to Australia ? And where
Would your poor girl be, if he hadn't gone
And found her out, and brought her back before
The poor thing had been ruined ? To his grave
The scar he carried, where the rascal lord
Brought down his riding-whip.

1st Woman. Ah well, he's gone.
God help us all ; the man is happy, now !

SCENE IV.

Spirit of HAROLD.

Harold. Oh perfect Spirit ! I can scarce believe
That through Eternity no star will cheer
The utter blackness, if the memory
Of thy enraptured face, my Brother, clings
To the poor shattered ruin of my soul !
—Here didst thou pass, with beings of such light,
Such splendid majesty, that I no more
Would look on forms of lesser beauty,—ere
Demons oppress my soul for ever.

Let
This sight be, on things lovely, my last look !
It was a taste of Heaven !—And, now, all past
And ended is my service dear, and I
Must turn away, with sad and heavy heart,
To the dark Realm whose ruler is Despair,
Where Hope must never come !

I am as he
Who, having no dear home, watches without
The window-full of faces that await
Their Father, or their brother ; and, in joy,
Seeing him coming, open wide the door,
And crowd about him and press in, and lo !
The sudden blaze from the stirred Christmas fire
Flares bright out on the darkness ;—and he turns
Sadly away to house him where he can,
Friendless, and fireless, and with heavy heart.
—Weak image of my lot !

—'Tis strange to me,
That I should quiet feel, and peace, and calm ;
Yet doubtless soon the anguish keen will come
With sudden rush ; and, as I have beheld

The fierce fire leap upon a still green tree,
And clasp it in its arms, and tower on high,
That all its branches, and fair living leaves,
Curl up, and blacken, and fall off, until
Nought but a dark and fire-charred trunk is left,
Thus will it be with me.

Yet praised be God !

I have my prayer, and he I love so well
Shall dwell for aye in happiness as bright—
—As Hell is dark and drear !

Yet shall my heart

Clutch tightly hold of gratitude to God,
Who granted me what now I still would seek,
Were it to seek again ! Praise to His Name !

SCENE V.

*The infinity of Space; gemmed with innumerable Worlds.
An Angel and a released Spirit traversing its depths.*

Spirit. How dim earth's dreams, to this reality !
Those highest spirits who best sang on earth,
Of Heaven's imagined glory, what, to them,
Must have been that which heart of mortal man
Not power had to conceive !

Angel. Yea. Dost behold
Those nearer worlds that orb in silence by ?
Each different utterly, each overclad
With perfect beauty various : every one,
To happy spirits, Heaven.

Spirit. And, far away,
Gradually less distinct, the myriad orbs
Lessen to stars. See, far beneath our feet,
Far down, how endless ever-moving worlds

Innumerably shrink into mere specks
Of finest light !

A world, in this planned maze,
Equally values with a grove or hill
In the earth landscape ; its adornments, but
As leaves and flowers that clothe them !

Strange to me

It seems, an Angel's vision keen to own,
To feel the soul, uncramped by flesh, expand
And ever widen, with its thoughts and powers.
Beyond far worlds away, sweet voices come,
Clear to my sense. As blending songs of birds,
Distinct, but not discordant, meet :—as hues
Blend, in a rainbow, in one various whole ;
Thus do the myriad songs about us blend,
Blend into one great hymn of praise to God !

Angel. Now let us stay, poise-winged, around to gaze ;
—If we should stoop with downward flight below ;
Or tower above : or, through surrounding space,
Wing, through eternal years, unstaying flight,
Still, never-ending worlds would throng and grow
And, passed, brighten in distance. Or maybe
Strange, unimagined, other schemes of things,
New orders of creation, to be learned
By us, adoring, ages hence, would, passed,
Give place to others still.

Men strive to mete
Heaven by their span-rule, and sameness fear.
Nor do they dream that other senses more
Than theirs exist ; each one as exquisite
As seeing, hearing, and all-satisfied
In this our Father's House.

Spirit. Behold, behold !
Rolls by our world half steeped in golden sun,
Half bathed by the moon's clear and diamond light,

A belt of dusky twilight, parting each
With gradual glooming edge. Abrupt from out
The gray, dim twilight shade a sheer torn cliff
Just on the verge holds yet the burning glow
From the red slanting sun ; and the white moon
Lingers like thought upon the mountain range
That, from the shade out-risen, o'erlooks her realm.

—Lo ! while I speak, the light moves slowly on,
The mountains slant sharp shadows from the sun,
And twilight has absorbed the towering cliff !

Angel. Sublime as is the mighty whole, the parts
Woo the ne'er-sated eye.

Spirit. Through nearer tones
Whose voices pierce, with keen seraphic joy,
From the unbounded space, and bear such deep,
Ecstatic gratitude ?

Angel. These are even they,
The so long watching Spirit, and the sad
And sorrow-burdened Brother, for whose love
He vigil kept, and battle waged, nor spared,
For his dear sake, Time and Eternity.

Spirit. Ah, tell the end !

Angel. His war and watching done,
The worn and weary Spirit stood aside,
Waiting his fate, where, thrilled with anguished joy,
He had beheld that Brother loved, upborne
With throng of Angels to the blest abode
Of Paradise.

This filled his heart that praised
The God of Mercy, who this boon had given
To his wild prayer. Alone he stood, and sad,
Expecting for the moment that should blast
For him all beauty and all joy. Around
Through the deep blackness he saw eager eyes
Of Fiends awaiting him.

But then he knelt
That, ere despair brought madness, he might pour
One heart-deep, latest strain of praise to God.
When, lo ! the darkness parted, and, at once,
A strange and glorious lustre shone around,
And the Fiends fled dismayed ! And, suddenly,
Paradise opened, and the Angels came
Thronging, as living stars, in countless troops,
And looked, with glad unutterable love,
Upon him. And the flood of glory burst
Above him, kneeling, patient, without hope,
And swam upon his features, and lit all
With ecstasy the care-dimmed eyes, and smote
The furrows from the weary brow, and forth
From down-drawn angles of toil-tortured lips,
Wooed a most rapturous, soul-entrancing smile,
Ravishing, as an Angel's.

Then, on that
Great wave of light, the swell of a great wave
Of music, lifted in one line, afar,
And nearer came, and rose, and towered, and brake,
Flooding us with its seas. Another came,
Another yet, and still wave after wave,
Then, to smooth calm of melody, at once
Sank low. Thence forth a thrilling peal arose
Of music such as never mortal dreamed,
And smote his features, by the rapture-thrill,
Into an Angel's !

Spirit. Oh, blessed patient toil !
Rich ecstasy of unforeseen reward !

Angel. Aye, to have seen the suffering patient face
Change, from that haggard woe to perfect joy,
Were added bliss to Angels.

But he rose,
Heaven-drawn, from earth, with most seraphic light,

Upon his brow, of radiant bliss. And all
 Around him thronged and closed the bright array,
 In endless train ; and, as they soared from earth,
 Each voice brake forth into the strains of Heaven,
 And not one voice was less than perfect there,
 And not a face or form, in all that throng,
 That gavè not gladness to the eye of God
 By the perfection of its loveliness.

I stood on earth, and watched them passing on,
 Until the quiet blue closed distantly
 O'er the last holy gleam, and only came
 Faint and from far, the Angel-melody,
 Threading the praising stars.

Once, when they passed
 Behind your Sun, his dimmed light shone obscure,
 Against that glory.

Spirit. But that Brother loved ?

Angel. Even Angel-language must fall short of words
 That might their meeting tell. Let it, then, pass.

A strange glad radiance lit the world of men,
 That morning ; and they mused to see the Sun
 Rise with new lustre, changing bare black trees
 Into a gold-lit glory ; and dull earth
 Bathing with splendour alien to this world ;
 Whilst, with ecstatic songs of gladness, soared
 Toward the sky that happy throng, and strains,
 But rarely heard by Angels, rose to God,
 Heralding their approach.

Spirit. Even as you speak

I seem to image a reflection faint
 Of that strange glory, and to dimly hear
 An echo of those thought-surpassing strains.

Angel. Oh watch them, Sister ! See afar they pass
 From yon world's sunshine to the brooding night,
 That wraps the orb beyond !

Onward they float,
And in the darkness you may note the gleam
Of their lit path, as when, to mortal eyes,
Glides by a falling star.

Watch, farther still
Their brightness gleams ; and faint, and clear, and low—
Still fainter growing—comes their song of joy :
Now they have lessened to a speck of light
Among the worlds ! Still less, and less, and, now,
The gleam has vanished.

Sister, we will on
Our bright, star-threading way.



SPRING.

THE Snowdrops cluster round the trees
Thick white against the dark rich brown,
—As Nuns that some pure mission frees
Awhile from the stern Convent's frown ;
In groups they wander, here and there,
Over the black and barren beds,
Puritan Winter's self must spare
The beauty of their bending heads.

And lo, from the bare Tulip-tree
Sun-gilded 'gainst the sky, of blue
Whose pure and pale tranquillity
Soothes, more than Summer's deeper hue,
The Thrush pours forth his welcoming
Of joy and love, his eager voice
Pleading, impassioned, " It is Spring !
Oh, wintry world, rejoice ! Rejoice ! "

HADDON HALL:

OR,

Father and Daughter.

A DREAM PICTURE IN TWO PANELS.

HADDON HALL:

OR,

Father and Daughter.

A DREAM PICTURE IN TWO PANELS.

PANEL I.: A.D. 1544.

HADDON HALL in the olden time! Going back, in imagination, more than three centuries, in the fall of the year we come in sight of its square towers and lit windows, whose orange light trembles in broken streaks upon the broad sheet into which the Derbyshire Wye has been gathered under its walls. Brave oaks, and dark yews, and tall sycamores, and full chestnuts, these are assembled about the grand and stately mansion, and one or two of the great trees have approached near enough to catch a gleam of intelligence concerning the gay doings within. See, the stream of gold from the windows has touched them here and there, and overlaid the red trunk of that yew with gold-leaf. But behind all this, that tall unlit double wall of scyamores shuts in the sheeted and the spilled light with a rampart of unbroken gloom.

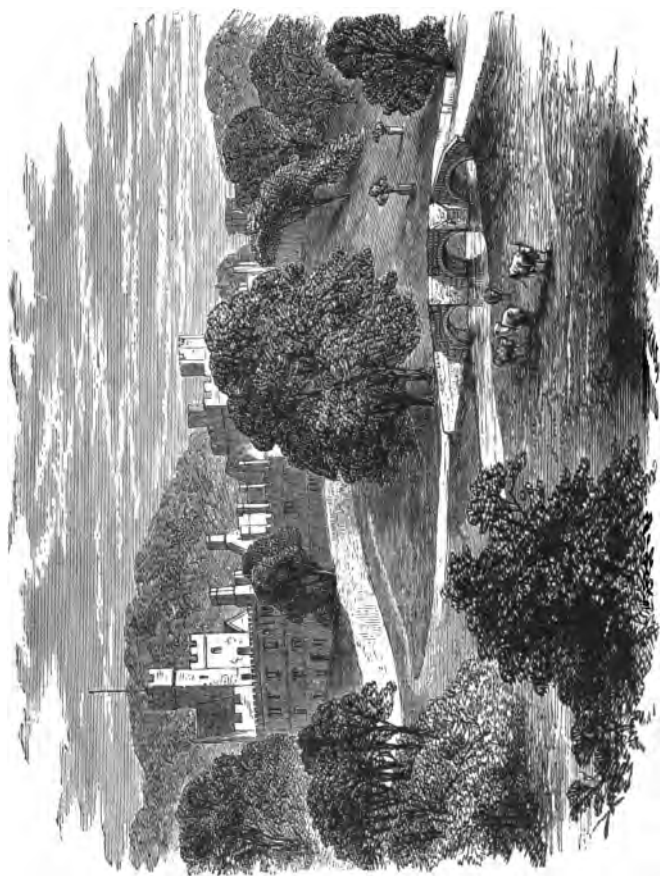
There are gay doings at Haddon to-night; that is evident at a glance. Let us pause for a few moments on this bridge, and take in the general effect, for the blaze in the courtyard brings out every turret, arch, battlement, as clearly as daylight could. Aye, more distinctly, for the muffled background of indistinct wood, and the black sky above all, cause every bit of detail in the masonry to be cut sharp out in yellow glare against the darkness. And, looking away from the wide sheet of light, it is almost more picturesque to

see the squares and slits of orange lustre picked clean out, here and there, in the whole mass of building. Especially that range of three wide bow-windows, seeming, as it were, to pour out a broadside of glowing radiance into the night, laying down a strip of gold across the square turf-compartments, and touching the stone balls that finish the range of balusters on either side the steps from the terrace. The terrace is dark, except for the flare of a random torch tied here and there : yes, for it is bleak October, and no lovers will steal out of the ball-room to-night for a sweet lingering about its trim sward-divided paths, or under its red-fruited yews. Dark, and unlit, except for that unsteady flare which does but serve to blacken the night. Ah, Sir George had better have turned all that hidden walk into more than the brightness of day !

But, as we stand here on the low stone bridge, the buzz of the Hall is deepening into a roar ; and, hark ! there was a sudden burst of the grave old dance-music ; and we may almost hear the shaking of the emblazoned panes, and the tremble of the vibrating floor under the feet of the dancers. It is cold and shivery here also, and the light and warmth and good cheer seem to send out a genial invitation on all sides.

Let us be the phantoms, and pass thus through the courtyard into the Hall, and let all that Phantom-Past be as though the reality again.

The birthday of Dorothy Vernon, daughter and heiress of the King of the Peak ; her eighteenth birthday is this, and there are in truth royal doings here. For seven days shall the feast be prolonged ; hawking and hunting and feasting in the day-time, and early in the evening the dance begins. Lordly feasting : the daïs is in its glory to-day : the high folk grace it as in old times, before the new dining-room was built, and the Lord of the Hall, with his guests, affected privacy. Long benches are set all down the great Hall, for



GENERAL VIEW OF HADDON HALL.

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

the two hundred retainers ; and mighty joints and enormous flagons load the unyielding back of the sturdy oak. And fair Dorothy, with her Duenna and her ladies, has laughed down upon the scene from the gallery—has laughed a gay and silvery laugh, to see the tremendous onslaught made upon the steaming fare ; and her kindly intercession has rescued a poor youth whom the law of the Hall had condemned, for failing in the first long draught, to be chained by the arm to that handcuff fixed under the largest antler, and to have four gallons of coldest water poured down his sleeve. Truly a formidable infliction ; and well may he congratulate himself, as he returns to his venison platter, that the sweet girl has interfered on his behalf.

But this is not all the feasting : no, for half the first quadrangle is taken up with tables, and all the tenantry and many strangers have been entertained. Have been ? The long oak settles yet bear, ranged along them, that which seems provision for a small siege ; and mighty barrels of ale and wine are complaisant to every comer, and cellars and buttery-hatch are kept open all day. The rude sports, the well-aimed jests, the dexterous repartee, the song, and the loud laugh : well might the roar that drowned the merriment be heard afar. But now we pass through the courtyard, and through the Hall, and seek the long tapestried rooms where are gathered the high-born and the beautiful for many miles around, rooms hung with dark blue-green tapestry, already old, worked through long patient years, by daughters of the Vernons : rich with elaborate pictures of the hunt, but with all the colours kept hushed and sober and unobtrusive ; a rich background, thus throwing into brilliant relief the groups of light and bright colour that straggle or cluster about the rooms and the ante-chambers. Also the eager huntsmen, and the spike-clad dogs, and the surly boar, enhance by contrast the gaiety and lightness of the peaceful gathering.

There stands the noble host, Sir George Vernon, the King of the Peak. In truth a fine old English gentleman ! One of the old true metal, nowadays too much superseded by electro-plate : the motto of his life and of his household that which is carven fairly over the fireplace of the dining-room :

“DREAD GOD AND HONOUR THE KING.”

A genial, kindly man, nearer seventy than sixty, yet hale and vigorous and mighty. How noble that silver cataract of beard, falling over the purple velvet ! How the eager flash of his blue eye softens, and the look, that well knows how to be stern, gentles, as it lights upon the queenly girl that even now sails in, with just the faintest flush on her cheeks, and with a bright, joyous look, as befits the heroine of the feast ! How proud he is of her ; how the old man loves her ! True, they have had some painful passages, even about the old, old story, but these are forgotten now. The generous-hearted old man is not one to remember long-past troubles. What wonder that he should flash up into a fury at the idea of that young whipper-snapper knight taking off his heiress, his beauty, his darling ; the child of his mature years, the delight of his age ? “The Princess of the Peak, he would have a care, should look higher than that. Besides, was there not a feud between the houses of Vernon and Manners ? and would not his girl have been gradually won over from her father’s side ?” So, when Dorothy had put her white arms round his neck, sitting on his lap one evening after the day’s hunting, and had whispered her secret in his ear, what wonder that he had turned the house topsy-turvy in his rage ? What wonder that, out of his very love for his darling, and pride in her, he had said to her hard and cruel words, had flung off her embrace ? Ah, but it had lain like an ache at the old man’s heart ever since ; and often he had (since it was all put by and forgotten) called her to him, with a hungry, yearning love, sharpened by

that secret repentance, and seated her on his lap, and joined her warm arms round his neck. It was all forgotten and forgiven of course ; had he not said, the very next day, " Dorothy, my child, I was too harsh yesterday ; you must forgive your old Father ;—but mind that I never hear the name again that angered me " ? And he called her to him, and she came ; and he bade her smile, and she smiled ; and he put her arms round his neck, and she left them there : and he had (must we say ?) a little forced himself to think that all was well. He would not let himself ever recall that cold way in which, on that sad evening, she rose and stood before him in his anger, quite pale, with downcast eyes, never speaking ; and how, when he dismissed her, quietly, and marble-like in face and look, she left the room. And since then she had obeyed, and never had spoken of Sir John Manners to her father. She had implicitly obeyed all his wishes ; nay, more, she had relaxed no observance—still the chair was put ready for his return ; still the meats provided that he loved ; still the many little graceful attentions waited on him. But (now Sir George would not allow this in his own heart, would refuse to notice it even in his secret mind) so it was, though she sat really oftener upon his lap, and oftener linked the soft arms around his neck, it was never of her own impulse, always at his fond bidding that she came ; and it was always his great caressing hands that laid the child's arms round his neck ; they never were flung round him in a tempest of love. He would not see this, would not admit it even to himself ; only he the more often and the more restlessly called her to him, and used to look at her and into her large passive eyes, with a long, wistful, almost dewy yearning at last, in the pale blue of his. She never jested now, nor laughed, nor played with him in those kitten-romps.

" Nay," he used to mutter to himself, as he wound back after the chase through Rowsley Woods ; " nay, the child grows into the woman, and a certain gravity and quiet befits

the evening of maidenhood. And yet"—he would say or think—"and yet, did I think her unhappy, it might be that the matter should be entertained. But the child never speaks to me of it: she might coax her old Father in her clinging way if she would." And he would ride on, still musing; and, as Haddon Gate was just reached, he would quiet his heart by saying, "Time will shew—time will shew."

And there Dorothy would be waiting for him; and he would clasp her to his broad old heart in a long and lingering clasp, and she would permit this; and how was it that the old knight sometimes had to check a groan as he released her? And his wooing would begin again when the evening had set in. Ah, Dorothy, beautiful Dorothy, *hard* Dorothy: has, then, the old man sinned past forgiveness, forgiveness from his child? And all those former years, are they nothing? And all this pathetic and wistful appealing, is all nothing? eighteen years of dearest kindness nothing, set against the trouble of one brief angry hour? Eighteen years and one hour! Ah, we are hard to each other; and my heart goes with the dear old man rather than with the proud spirit of the cruel girl.

But let us steal back to the drawing-room at Haddon, and watch. See, how absently the old knight has been entertaining his guests, with restless look towards the door, until, as we saw, the queen of the evening sails in: bright now, and flushed with joy, and looking more like the glad child of the past. And her father has hastened to meet her, and embrace her, and to lead her in; for has he not planned all this gaiety to please her? and is he not rejoiced to note his success? And see, she has, much with the old child-impulse, ringed his neck with that white necklace as of old! The grand, stately gentleman and the angel-beauty of the tall, slight girl; never did the dark tapestry make a background to a lovelier picture. The old knight was gay

as a child that evening. And all were gay, for, with the entrance of the Princess of the House, the music in the ball-room had burst out jubilantly, and soon the dancers were moving with stately grace all down the long oak floor. Let them begin their evening without us, while we go back in our reverie to a scene upon the terrace the very evening before this.

“You are here, then, Dorothy; you have come at last, after keeping me waiting a long hour under the damp gloom of these yews, watching the red windows, and almost thinking that you had forgotten me.”

“Hush, hush; I came, be sure, as soon as I could escape from Sir George; but he, more than usual, required my services to-night.”

“*Sir George*, Dorothy? Ah, I could almost feel sad to hear you speak so of him. ‘The dear Father,’ as you used to call him, and say how you were sure that he could deny you nothing; do you know that you had taught me to love him too?”

“Enough: I was mistaken in him; and, once awakened, awakened I *am*. Duty, observance, respect, he shall never look for from me in vain. But he has once thrown away my love. I remember what was said to me that night. But I shudder; why do we talk of it, my friend?”

“I can hardly say, only it seems so sad; I cannot help thinking, may not my turn come? Can an hour weigh in the balance against a life-love? Is there no repentance for one hasty fault? I could weep for the kind old man. I can scarcely bear in secret to pluck his rose, and leave him to find it gone from the tree. Dear Dorothy, why not appeal to him once more, for the last time?”

But she had withdrawn from him now, and spoke slowly, coldly:—

"One insult is enough for Dorothy Vernon. If Sir John Manners cares more for the father's interests than for the daughter's love, there is nothing yet done that cannot lightly be recalled."

What could a lover, one so devoted, so impassioned as the young knight—what could he say? The stars came one by one into the dark yew-branches above them, and looked down through the thready tangle upon the terrace, and the soft wind sighed with almost summer tenderness, and there were murmured questions and low replies, and lips that met in the long, long kiss; and the old knight woke by his fading fire, and, missing the Star of his life, a little peevishly settled to doze again.

"To-morrow night, then?" whispered the lover.

"Yes, after the fourth dance;" and Dorothy glided quietly back into the warm-lit room, and took her place beside the fire; and the old knight presently roused again, and, his glance instinctively seeking her corner, brightened at seeing his child.

"Ah, Dorothy, my girl, your old Father makes but dull company for you. But there will be gaiety enough to-morrow, to be sure."

Was there no reviving tenderness at the girl's heart—no melting of the ice of cruel pride? No, none. So long the indulged pet of a widowed father, the first serious opposition to her will had been a crime that no after-kindness could expiate. So true is the saying of a writer of her day, to the effect that an unselfish parent makes a selfish child. A contempt and even a dislike for the faithful-hearted and doting old man had turned the daughter's heart to ice or stone. And the gay light of her look, on that evening as she entered the brilliant room, arose simply from her feeling that her emancipation was so near, with something too of a young girl's delight in the romance of it all; not, as the Father fondly concluded, from

pleasure at the amusements which he had provided for her birthday feast. Why, then, did that sudden impulse come over her, making her embrace him for the moment kindly as of old? I cannot say: perhaps it was the mere overflowing glee of the girl; perhaps there *may* have been just one touch of an amiable inconsistency. However this was, the old knight was the gainer of a glad two hours by it. And Sir John Manners was waiting in the dark.

Sir George himself, none other, had led the Princess of the evening down the long ball-room in the first, a country, dance. Such a scene of brightness and gaiety; the broad bow-windows looked out, white-hot, into the dark. And the floor trembled and the music cadenced, and in the glare of light and beauty, and in the noise of music and of merriment, the first three dances passed.

And who so gay as Dorothy through them all? And for the fourth, who must be her partner, but even her old Father again? Cruel Dorothy, why so please him, before—

But towards the end she pouted, and tapped him with her fan, and declared that he had torn her dress—her birthday dress. And the dancing must go on; with pretty wilfulness she insists on this; and her father must take Maud, her young sister, scarce noticed by him or her, for partner; and she must change her dress. And so, with heightened colour and light laugh, she leaves the ball-room; leaves it down there at the very end, and passes into the ante-room which communicates with the state apartments. With a petulant word she clears the ante-room of any lingering lovers, and sets a maiden as sentry at the ball-room door, that none (such was the will of the Princess of the evening) might intrude upon her privacy in these rooms. Once Sir George essayed to pass, but laughingly acquiesced in being forbidden and driven back.

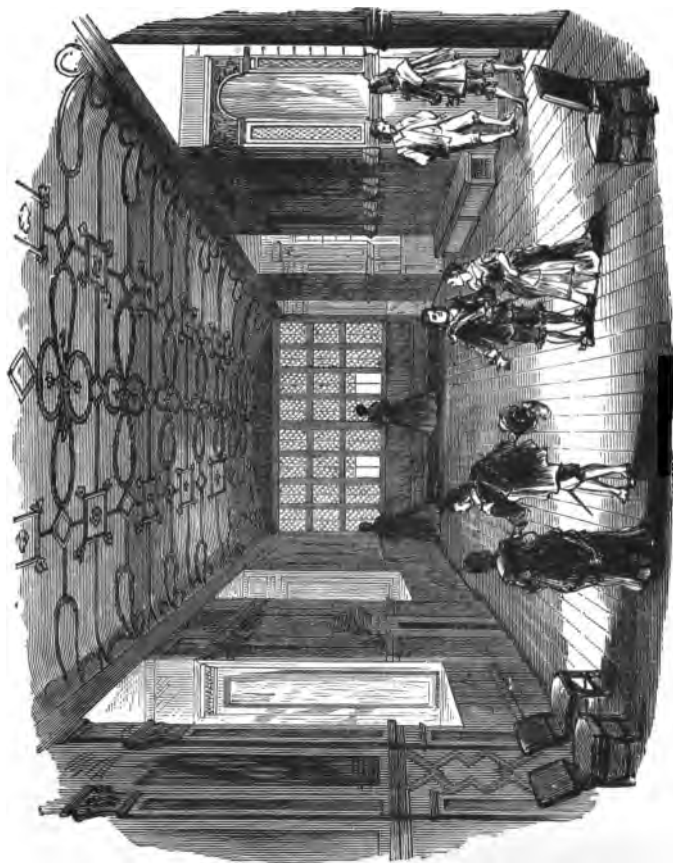
And the dance went on, and the mirth waxed fuller.

and the music louder, and the ball-room from end to end was one blaze of light, and colour, and beauty, and nobility.

“Bright

The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men ;
A thousand hearts beat happily ; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell.”

Meanwhile, Dorothy, having indeed changed her dress, habited now in close-fitting black velvet, her long pale-gold hair tied in a knot behind her head, passed from the state-room into the ante-room. Her attendant was waiting, finger on lip, at the ball-room entrance ; just then the loud burst of music and of laughter rang out, and Dorothy, with fearful heart, glided through the ante-room, out at the little side door, down the ten steps on to the terrace. Suddenly, clasped in a strong arm, she could have screamed, but restrained herself, hearing the whispered words, “My darling ! my wife !” Black-dark, the darker for the flare of those torches tied to the trees ; but they steal up those stone stairs into the walk between the sycamores above the terrace ; the leaves rustle beneath their fearful tread ; an owl hoots above ; the music seems to scream after them from the window ; surely there is already an alarm ; the chase is up ! and the girl trembles and clings to her lover, and he hastens her on, half catching her fear, but joying that she should cling to him, and knowing by the music that all is yet secure. And so they hurry on, giddy with love and apprehension ; and they reach the low wall which bounds the sycamore walk ; and the lover lightly helps his bride over ; and there waits his squire with Sir John's strong horse, and a lady's fleet palfrey ; a touch, a spring, and they are swiftly and noiselessly speeding over the wet, spongy turf : between the trees, and through the shallow



THE BALI-ROOM.



river, and across the muffling turf again, and so—but at a safe distance for sound—into the clattering high road at last. And as Dorothy turns back to look, lo, in slits and squares the lit windows shine out from the towers of her old home ; the orange oriels glow into the dark ; and, last thing that she sees, the three wide windows of the ball-room stream out their flood of light over the black, silent trees and the leaden, sleeping river, as they gallop towards little Rowsley, and leave gay Haddon like a shell without a kernel.

Alas, for Sir George when, after long-persisted-in disbelief, the truth was forced on his tender old heart !

“ My shadow falls upon my grave,
So near the brink I stand ;
She might have stayed a little yet,
And led me by the hand ! ”

Nay, for he might have lived long years yet, the brave and hearty old man—he might have lived long years yet but for that night. For—however the effect was not immediate—that cruel night was his death-blow. The glory of Haddon was gone ; the state of the King of the Peak was no longer kept up : of his two hundred retainers the greater part dropped away, nor did he care to supply their places. The rough, tender heart was just broken ; the strong man drooped from that night ; he went about bent and trembling and old, who was so upright and hale and vigorous. A dull despondency settled upon him ; poor little Maud, who tried her best, could never awake him from it ; he would seldom join now in the sports that he loved in old days ; he would stay by the fire, drumming on the arm of his huge oak chair, and dreamily gazing into the ashes. He was very patient and gentle : he never said a hard word of her who had left him ; only his joy of life had gone ; only his faithful old heart was broken.

“ Aye, call her on the barren moor,
And call her on the hill,
'Tis nothing but the heron's cry,
And plover's answer shrill ;
My child is flown on wilder wings
Than they have ever spread,
And I may even walk a waste
That widened when she fled.”

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And so the days and the months went on with him, and so a year or two passed. He was much alone in his old age, for in truth he was but poor company now ; it was a broken life, and he cared not, nor indeed had the force, to rally his spirits and to be anything of a companion—he who was so gay and blithe. And the piercing blue of his snowy-eaved eye had faded as a sky blotted of stars ; and you would have called him a foot less in height than when he so grandly led Dorothy into the drawing-room that evening.

And so the days and the months went on with him, and even so passed a year or two.

Then the anniversary of that day came round ; came round and had darkened into evening : and the old man sat by the fire, bent together in the oak chair which was too big for him now, not like that stately and grand Sir George Vernon whom men called the “ King of the Peak.” Timidly and sadly did Maud watch him ; not from Dorothy's place ; no, he lost all his patience and gentleness (which qualities had grown on him) if anyone ever by any chance took *that* : but from a low stool near his feet. For two hours he had sat unmoved, and Maud had full leisure to wonder whether the fear, that she had taken measures to convey to Dorothy, would at all touch that unkind heart ; and if it did, how the old knight (supposing she sought reconciliation) would entertain the proposal. Maud had thought of these things and wondered about them, and watched her Father, until she had become almost drowsy, so still he remained : and

yet he was not asleep : only looking into the ashes on the hearth, and now and then at Dorothy's empty chair.

Suddenly Maud was startled from her half-stupor by his voice, and by something strange in it, unnatural, new to her.

"Maud, he said, "Maud, child, Dorothy is a long while coming. A long—*long*—while coming."

The girl started and looked at him, almost thinking that he must have read her thoughts, or that he had discovered her plan. But as she looked at him anxiously, she was struck by the strange, troubled brightness in his dull blue eye. But he went on, more to himself than to her—

"Dorothy, you know, is seventeen—no, eighteen—years old to-day, and we have a dance for her birthday, and the people will be coming, and she will never be ready. She is a good girl, is Dorothy. I angered her once, and I was partly to blame : I was hasty ; but she is a good girl, and she forgave all that and forgot it—ah, she could make allowances for her poor old Father. Eighteen years old to-day : and all the company here : and I wish she would come. I want to see her——"

Maud had risen fearfully and anxiously, for there was a strange, unnatural look in her Father's face : she had risen and put one arm round his neck ; he took little notice of it, but seemed soothed, as if by some old association. Meanwhile, there had been a trampling of horses' hoofs on the pavement of the Courtyard, and a hushed cry of joy and wonder from the old Steward ; and had Maud been less absorbed, she might have heard footsteps, and the murmur of repressed voices drawing near the room. She heard them not ; but the old knight looked up as the door opened, and seeing who stood there, staggered to his feet, and hastened with tottering alacrity to the door, exclaiming, "Why, Dorothy, dear child, you are late, you are late, and all my guests are here ; but come, give me one kiss, and take my arm, darling, and let us go and meet them." I suppose

Dorothy was too much surprised by the greeting, too much pained and wonder-stricken, let us think, with the change, to answer or to resist ; but, oh, it was a pathetic parody of that old proud day ! The girl, indeed, ripened into a fuller, richer, grander beauty ; but the strong and stately man—ah, what a feeble wreck !—bent and tottering beneath an over-sudden old age, was leading her now, not to a gay company, but to the weeping girl beside the dying fire !

Kneeling at his feet now, and sobbing : he had sunk back into his settle again, and had relapsed into that dreamy gazing into the fire. “ Father, can you forgive me ? Father, will you not look at me ? ”

Then he turned and saw her sobbing and holding his thin, passive hand.

“ Why, Dorothy,” he said, “ how is this ? What, my girl, so unhappy ? That must not be ; that must not be. I know I spoke sharply, but the old man’s bark is worse than his bite. Come, ask what you will, I shall not hold out.”

“ Father, my Husband is here ? May he come in ? Will you see him ? ”

For a moment a puzzled look came over the old man’s brow ; then some return of consciousness relit his eyes, and it was pitiable to see the change that came over him. So broken, so meek, so submissive to his daughter ; and when Sir John Manners came and sat beside him, such a piteous and trembling endeavour to make him welcome, to conciliate him. “ I was harsh,” he kept saying ; “ I was hard, I know ; but you will forgive the old man, won’t you, Sir John ? And Dorothy, we will try to make Haddon more lively for her, and you will come and see us sometimes.”

“ I was harsh, I know ; ” he kept on murmuring this, as he fell back in his chair : and he heard not, or heeded not, his Dorothy’s broken words as she knelt beside him. At last he raised himself, and took her tiny hand in his thin, long fingers, and petted it, and caressed it, and looked at

her, and smiled, with two big tears running down his aged and furrowed cheeks, and said, "But you've forgiven me all that, Dorothy, my child, long ago, long ago."

And that was all. And now Dorothy's turn had come to link passionate arms about an unresponsive form, and to press to her bosom that which was all passive to her caresses and indifferent to her tears. And for her too, now, there was that desolation of the empty shell without the kernel.

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When Sir John and Lady Manners came to live at Haddon there was danger of the lady of the Hall getting into a low way. For she would spend hours, moody, long hours, in each day in pacing the long ball-room, and in passing from it through the ante-room down the ten steps, on to the terrace, and thence would walk backwards and forwards between the tall sycamores in that upper walk which has ever since been called by her name. Thus it came to pass that Sir John at last insisted on having all the rooms, and specially the ball-room, refitted and altered, so that now we see the Manners' Peacock alternating throughout with the Boar's-head crest of that branch of the Vernons. Then, again, gaiety and music resounded through the noble mansion. But Dorothy never lost a certain grave sadness, which, however, had the effect upon her of making her tender-hearted to sorrow and patient with sin, and pleased, though herself never merry, that those about her should be glad. Only once to her Husband she alluded to the past, and that was in explaining to him at first her wish to see the Hall hospitable and festive again. "It was *his* way," she said, "and he always liked to spread kindness and happiness about him."

But no doubt she bore her silent sorrow and repentance to the grave.



DOROTHY VERNON'S DOORWAY.

PANEL II.: A.D. 1868.

BUT I wake with a start ; and behold, it was a dream ! Yes, O puzzled or indignant antiquarian or chronicler, even all a dream, a frail, evanescent fancy that sprang on a genial day from the gray, gnarled root of the long-buried fact. Dorothy Vernon ; Sir John, her lover ; Sir George, her Father ; these indeed all lived once ; they were once real flesh and blood, how-

ever they are thinnest phantoms now. And it is true that he was royal and magnificent in hospitality; and of his two hundred retainers (double those of poor King Lear!)—and of his title, “King of the Peak;”—all is true that is writ of these. And true that Sir John waited on that terrace, and true that on a ball-night Dorothy stole fearfully and a-tiptoe down those ten steps, under the shadow of the dark yews; and true that the Manners’ Peacock hereafter alternated with the Boar’s-head of that branch of the Vernons; but that is all the fact that I had as the foundation for my fancies. These were the bare branches which I made bold to festoon with the frail leaf and blossom of my own thought. And why not? Or why not sit upon a broken stone by the Sundial, under that (somehow) fascinating terrace, and just wind up in my own way, and after my own pleasure, the old machinery that stopped dead so long ago? Then the works begin to move, and the wheels to turn, and the figures appear at the windows, and pass in and out at the doors, and there is Daily Service in that old chapel, and daily feasting at the Daïs, and loud music in the ball-room, and a tempest of dancing all down its long length, and all is life and colour and glee. And the next moment it pleases me (sitting by the Sundial stained with eld) to look up, and behold, there is just a robin trilling a few autumn stanzas upon a stone globe half-way up the broad steps; and I am alone in the garden of Haddon Hall—left alone, at my request, by the complaisant maiden who shews visitors over the deserted Mansion, for some capricious and tender meditations by the time-worn, lichen-dyed Dial. Some big sober tomes I have seen, which appear to take a different view of the past than that which it has pleased me to fashion. Let it pass; may not any muser at his will take up the old theme, and work it into a *fugue*—rather, a light *caprice*? travelling into the domain of what *may*, at any rate of what *might*, have been?

Thus my butterfly-paper has eluded the swift critic-swallows ; and I take up my oaten flute or my sable pencil, which you will (the Muses, you know, are sisters), and call up Haddon Hall in the present, as when I first saw it, and as it remains clear and dear to my memory—that book whose photographs give not form only, and light and shade, but even the bright colouring of the originals—colouring only a little softened and toned down as the months and the years steal by.

That lovely September day ! A day that would have been lovely, pleasant to recall, had it been spent in even a dingy city, which yet would then have had beauty, just washed by yesterday's rain ; squares of yellow light, and breadths of flat shade, and rhomboids and parallelograms of clear blue cut out by the house-tops and the long streets. How lovely then, and sweet to remember, seeing that day was passed at Rowsley, and Haddon Hall !

A most lovely morning. All yesterday it had rained steadily, but we were then only at modern *Chatsworth*, and so grudged not much the leaden skies. Especially as we—in the nick of time, just as we had sallied forth, equipped, as we best might, extempore, to dare the torrent for a three miles' walk—especially as we just then happened upon an omnibus to Edensor, which carried us dry to an inn in that pretty village, and there transferred us to another of its species which carried us dry to Rowsley.

Dear Rowsley, peaceful Rowsley, pretty Rowsley ; then first I made thy acquaintance, when we stepped out from our shelter into the deluge, and thence with fearful hearts into the refuge of the Peacock Inn, surely the most charming and perfect of all hostleries. Hurrah ! we could be received into that delightful haven. Evidently it was a favour to be accepted as guests there at all, and our genius was abashed in the presence of the stately hostess. At her

advice—shall I not rather say command?—we left the matter of dinner to her careful and wise judgment ; and so, with the rain outside, and the cosy fire in, we were settled for the evening, and, indeed, might well number ourselves among those who, in some rare hour—

“Feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by ;
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die.”

And so that day died ; and we were soon at breakfast, together with three strangers, to whom we were as genial as we islanders proverbially are, hastening to get the start of any of them (dreading company extern after the true English fashion) and to strike into the road to Haddon Hall.

A marked day ; a special day ; a day to lean back and think about in after-years. A little after nine o'clock it was that we found ourselves upon the road, upon the firm, cool road that looked so brown and refreshed, that had sucked in every trace of water, but remained just warmly moist. There was no mist at all, but the sky was softened and deepened. There was no heat, but just a delicious warmth. There was no perceptible decay, but only such a prescience of it as gave to the day a pensive sweetness which added a zest to its beauty. In short, it was an intensely calm, warm, blue September day after rain. They who collect days, and set them out orderly in the mind's cabinet, will ask no fuller label than this.

Let me recall the walk, for a sentence or two. The quiet, the calm, unobtrusively autumnal ; the heart full of pleasure in the present moment, and in the pleased expectation ; mine elder brother, revered and loved, the congenial companion. Robins spilling all about us sprightly, pathetic trills. Thorns, that had been white with May, now as wholly scarlet, for the Autumn of 1868 was a marvel for

berries. Beeches and oaks just, only just, touched ; a flush on the face of nature that could not be excitement on that quiet day, and now that the year's youth lay on the other side of dusty Summer ; nor could we think of it as a hectic flush yet. Only the many wych-elms in the plantations by the wayside, and in the woods about Haddon—these, it is true, had alternated every dark green leaf with one of deep chrome ; nor did they care to hide the fact that a third of their foliage had slipped off, and lay motionless within the palings at their feet.

“ There is Haddon Hall ! ”

Why had the place such a fascination for me ? Why did this announcement give me such a thrill ? Was it that I had certain reasons for connecting my own name with that of former dwellers there ? or was it only the spell that (as our Exhibitions shew) the venerable, deserted relic of the past does seem to cast over every at all imaginative mind ? Modern Chatsworth yesterday ; and gray, stately Haddon to-day. What a contrast ! So my heart leapt when I saw the ancient turrets set in the green landscape—a refreshment of gray out of the dark, still trees. And this was Haddon !

Well, we passed on ; stood awhile upon the old bridge to look down at the Wye with its island of birch-trees, and to take in the Hall from that point ; then on to the pretty little cottage with the quaint yew Peacock and Boar's-head in the garden, and at that time covered with pyracanthus-bunches of vivid orange. At this cottage lived a maiden willing to do the honours of the Mansion. And so we were soon in the first Courtyard or Quadrangle. Did we not call up before us the fair company with which Landseer has peopled such stillness ? Were not the ringing laugh of page and maiden there, and the clatter of horses' hoofs, and the scream of teased hawk, and the loving look of petted hound,—and youth, and gladness, and sweet faces, that long ago

were dust? Yes, but I confess that Dorothy was the genius of the place to me, and every staircase and terrace and doorway pedestalled or framed her proud and stately beauty. Here she lightly tripped alone in her young, girlish glee; here she moved sedately in her queen's grace; here her old Father stood and looked after her cold, retreating form. I see the wistful blue of his following eyes; I see the little movement about the corners of his mouth; I hear his half-sigh as he turns to go.—Pshaw! can I not remember that these are the phantoms of my own idle brain? But, for all that, I meet the wilful, lovely, cruel child at every turn. Is Sir John even now lingering near the terrace; is she stealing, dainty and bright-hued as a camellia, under the yews towards the low wall? Hush; more than three hundred years have passed since then. Is it not always sad to call back again beauty and love that the Past has fretted into ruin?

Better to cease my reverie, and to follow our guide into the Chaplain's room. I feel ashamed, thinking of my luxurious taste, which yet I have been used to think plain and simple. But methinks such a Study would hardly content me. A bit of carpet, a movable table, a chair or two, an engraving or so after Leonardo or Ary Scheffer; my dear books, and, yes, a peep out into the sweet Rowsley landscape from the window at which I might study; not much to ask, but truly great luxury compared to any of the arrangements that seem contemplated in this cell. I'll warrant Dorothy seldom troubled it; or, if she looked in now and then, what a rare bright flower she must have blossomed in the setting of the old stone!

Ah, the Chapel! I can well fancy her there! A pathos there seems to me in it all; the old desk and pulpit unused, the Altar deserted, the old ugly pews unfilled. 'Tis, in truth, a relic of the degenerate time of Church order and Church arrangements, and no decently ordered service could

well have been carried on in this building, whose cosy rooms (in the Chancel !) for the rich are well railed and screened off from the plain benches for the poor—a Daïs in God's House besides His own. But I can people it well ; the bright and lovely young, and the grave and stately old, in that Chancel part ; and the broad-shouldered, buff-booted retainers on the rude benches.

Then up a crazy flight of stairs by the porch there is a Confessional ; other stairs lead to a room connected with it. There are holes in the stone wall for attentive ear on one side, and hesitating lips on the other. What conduits for sorrowful and sinful tales, for agonised fears, and shameful stammerings, and angers with only the white heat off them, and heavenly aspirations perhaps, and earthly desires ! These channels in the stone wall fascinate me, when I think, for all their silence and dumbness now, of the flood that human hearts have emptied through them. Could sin flow through and leave no stain ? Could sighs and sobs leave all thus dull and impassive ? What strange ghosts of old sufferings and temptations, anguishes and crimes, past, except for their effects, would startle the ear, if one could sit here and receive again a sample of the stream that trickled or poured through these drains for the heart's sewage, or pipes for its rain-water !

But my brother and our guide have passed through the Courtyard into the Banqueting-hall. There are the antlers that would naturally adorn it ; here is the Daïs ; there the gallery where Dorothy—Pshaw !

Thence the private dining-room : I do not so well like the idea of this ; it is not so feudal. We stand in the bay-window, however, and admire the beautiful wood-carver's cornice ; and the motto over the fire-place. Then we ascend into the drawing-room above, with that old green tapestry which occupied for so many years the slender fingers and bright eyes of Vernon maidens before Dorothy's time. For

you remember it was here that Sir George—Bear with me, I must really set a curb on my erratic fancies.

Other small rooms : more tapestry. But now, the ball-room ! Ah, you must indulge me a little here ! An empty, deserted, hollow, desolate, silent ball-room : there will always be food for a melancholy Jaques in such a scene. But how much more is this at Haddon ! I picture that gaiety and glee : the music, the loveliness, the manly grace ; the heightened colour, the shy looks, the ringing laugh, the archness ; hair black, and auburn, or golden ; eyes hazel, sea-blue, or brown ; the love-making and the love come to hand involuntarily ; and the heartlessness, and the heartfulness, and the nature and the art. All that scene of life and gladness of three hundred years ago ! And the queen's merry look as she passes into that ante-chamber ; and the whisper that somehow arises presently in the mirth ; and the sudden breaking off of the music into a wail ; and the old man's incredulity ; then that stricken look that we saw ; and the gallants eager to follow, hot for horse and spur. But the old flash has come back into his eye of autumn-blue ; and he lays his commanding hand upon the arm of the leader. "*Nay, my child shall not be hunted like a fox or a deer. It was her wish to leave me. Let the dance go on !*"

But now, look down the blank and empty room. All orderly and clean, all well preserved, but how exceedingly desolate ! Those blank places for the sconces on the walls ; but only the solemn moonlight comes of a night to light up the long room now : dividing its length with three broad squares of cold, lattice-patterned, mullion-barred radiance. The fireless hearth, with its ancient fire-dogs, on which half-trees used to lie, and the great roaring flame would flash far up the chimney, and send out its red gleam into the dark, river-circled precincts. But it is sightless now : a socket without the kindling eye. How hollow and dreary the sound of our steps as we walk down the room ! And

WHAT is this at the end? Ah, this completes—nay, rather, mars—the desolate picture, bringing into it the element of ghastliness and horror. A cast of an aged face, the face of a lady of ninety-three, *a cast taken from death*, two hundred years ago! And there, at the very end of the long, empty ball-room, it watches, out of its square glass case. It watches through the warm sunlight or the cold moonlight that slowly veers across the floor and climbs the opposite wall; perhaps the white light gradually ascends to its frame, and brings out distinctly the awful picture. It watches, in the deep, dead dark, where its dreadful vigilance all down that place whose merriment is silenced makes the very idea of it awful. For these—how many?—years it has watched down this deserted hall:

“The lights are fled,
The garlands dead,
And all but IT departed.”

Pah! 'Tis an incongruity: an offence; out of harmony with the tender melancholies of the place. It brings in horror and ghastliness for pathos and a twilight gloom. It turns the empty ball-room into a charnel-house. What a grotesque and horrible mockery it suggests! Ninety years' worldliness (let us suppose), and at the weary end set to watch down a silent ball-room for two hundred years already! But I protest against the grim moral. It has disturbed the even cadence of my mind. What, is this a fit sentinel for the place, once crowded and vibrating with youth, and love, and beauty? Must I think of my Queen Dorothy in connection with this——?

Away! Let us go out into the gentle air, and call back the old legend, as we pass (as Dorothy did) through the ante-room, and out at her fearful door, and down her ten stone steps to the terrace. There, the blackness passes from the mind, and the sweet, subdued light, as through

grisaille windows—light that is not gloom—becomes its atmosphere again.

I shall indulge myself by supposing all the arrangements unaltered since the time of that old story. In sooth, they were then probably much the same as now. These may be children of a later generation, as we are, these other trees ; but these yews I may think of as little altered. Those tall sycamores also behind, in Dorothy's Walk ; either these or their ancestors, spread their arms over her superb beauty in the sunshine ; they shivered and shimmered fearfully as she stole with held breath under them in the dark. So let me look at all, and dream my fill.

I love to get by heart all the arrangements. These yew-trees in fours on the terrace ; the thinner grass underneath them ; the abundant red fruit ; the carpet of thready yellow yew-fringe, and of wych-elm leaves ; the dying, druggish scent. The pale sky through the dark, matted boughs ; stone seats, here and there, where Dorothy would sit perhaps a moody hour or two, after the old man——

Balls on the balustrade, six and six on each side the broad stairs ; three on each side as I descend the flight, counting twenty-five steps. A scarf of ivy hastily thrown over the balustrade along the terrace, and covering a stone ball beside the stairs. A square yew hedge beneath.

A long lawn at the foot of the flight under the ball-room ; the length of it and of the first ante-room.

But the terrace is now lonely, deserted. Robins possess it, and try hard to make the best of all—fit spokesmen, as they have been called, of “ calm decay.” They are welcome here. They are in perfect harmony. We do not want the bat's wing, or the owlet's shriek, or the raven's croak : not that horror repeated of the—Hence, vile jar !

No, the robins interpret it all very well. What a cheerfulness, with the tears just underneath it, lies in their broken trills ! There sits one of their choir upon that middle stone

ball. Just the Autumn-foreboding in the landscape, in the pale sky, in the dim scents ; and the quiet, Spring-forsaken, Summer-deserted, solemn, gray old Hall, in such harmony with the season and the scene ; and these would-be cheery and sprightly songsters that only came into notice when Summer fled, subtly stirring the heart's sympathies with those broken, bright warbles, that seem somehow sharp and rich with Autumn colour ; and to partake of that vivid red of the thorns, of that keen verdure of the meadows, of that distinct orange of the leaves.

But I talk.

On the terrace among the yews I find an old apple-tree, none caring for the fruit. I have enough of the boy in me to feel a strong sense of the desertion which permits its produce to lie about unsought, unvalued. Red apples lying on the grass and walks, uncared for ; hollowed by ants ; some dotting the hoary branches, ungathered.

A little harshly, but the ivy softens it, comes to me that dead, gaunt tree on the lawn, under the terrace ; a skeleton, but yet itself not without beauty ; and the kind ivy, that would screen it ; I am reminded of old Sir George and his gentle Maud. 'Tis death in its beauty, not like—but let me not recur to that.

And here I come upon my Sundial, a great discovery. Up two steps, in the corner of the lower terrace, on the stone wall, 1591. Some two hundred and eighty years then it has told the minutes and the hours of this fleeting life, since (I doubt not) Dorothy in her old age (fancy Dorothy old !) first had it put there. And here she used to sit, and think of the days that were past, and of that former Dorothy—the blithe child Dorothy, the merry maiden Dorothy, the stern woman Dorothy, the sad matron Dorothy. *"And it seems like a dream. And now I am myself old. Ah, I shall soon be able to ask him to forgive."*

A fit place, a sweet place, for Dorothy and for me to



VERNON MONUMENT.

muse in, with but two hundred and eighty years between us. The sweet, holy gray of that ancient Building. The silent, broad bow-windows of that abandoned room. The ivy just draping the corner of the ball-room towards the terrace. The shadow of the bold string-course that divides the face of the façade. The unguarded towers, the lifeless

banner-pole. In short, gray and dear old Haddon Hall. This the view on one side, as we sit.

And underneath, the river winding "at its own sweet will," making a great peaceful bend among the meadows, and under the trees. An amphitheatre of hills closing in all. An Autumn sky, in which the air is perceptible (so to speak) between us and the blue. A flock of sheep coming slowly along just beneath, with a subdued and murmurous bleating. A caw or two, as a blue-black lazy wing flaps overhead. The broken, seldom-pausing sob of doves in the trees a little away.

May not an hour or so pass well in such a rare day and scene, and life's toil and moil seem really farther away than do those old days of Haddon's glory, as we sit by the venerable, lichen-overspread Dial? An hour of dreamy peace; a quiet resting-time; a pause in the wear and tear of many perplexities, and anxieties, and endeavours.

So thought my brother and I. But presently we were passing away—with minds that seemed to have been just tuned—passing away from Haddon. And since that day, how many has the Dial gathered up, and put in their places upon the great shelves of the Past!



VALENTINES TO MY WIFE.



VALENTINES TO MY WIFE.



No. 1.

LOVE'S TRANSFORMATION.

(Coming at a time of Dejection.)

You found me in the Winter time,
When all was stripped and drear,
Lamenting by the finished chime
Of the scarce-ended year ;
The sky of Spring was in your smile,
Her bird-notes in your voice,—
And yet my heart refused awhile
The summons to rejoice.

You Spring-wise wrought a wreath of flowers
By bird-songs linked and blended,
And cast it on the light-winged hours,
As each from Heaven descended ;
And gradually your music smote
Warmth to my Winter-bosom,
There, answering birds essayed their note,
And answering flowers their blossom.

First NOTICE brake in snowdrop throngs
Through dark clods of DEJECTION,
Twinned with the sober Robin-songs
Of Friendship's calm affection ;
But soon the Violet's hinted scent
Through leaves of unsuspicion,

With Chiff-chaff cheer-notes fitly blent,—
Marked unobserved transition.

When MUTUAL TRUST, the Primrose, filled
Each frost-scarred rent and gash,
The Willow-wren his light laugh trilled
From the yet-leafless Ash ;
The first Thrush-carol lit the air :
—The trees to dim life started,
And trembling whispers here and there
Told, Winter had departed !

But when the Blackbird joined the Thrush,
And each his soul let flutter,
Until each tree and every bush
Had only Love to utter ;
The sudden light of leaves brake thick
O'er near, and over far, land,
And every little twig and stick
Had each his own May-garland.

Blue Hyacinths through the dark-stemmed trees
Bent down their bells unnumbered ;
The rose-tinged star Anemones
In that gray heaven slumbered ;
The Hawthorn spread its calm of white,
Bent 'neath the piled-up riches,
To flowers of earth, with bondage light,
Linked loose, by purple Vetches.

To Blackcap preludes answered meet
Live light, and hushed gray shadow,
O'er the unbroken Narcisse-sheet
That hid with white the meadow ;

But, oh, the wild ecstatic chant
 The Nightingales had kept hid,
 Till blossomed, o'er a Heart's-ease plant,
 The strange wild Rose,—ACCEPTED !



Still, as the year of flowers went by,
 Joy's Water-lily rested,
 Just stirred at times by RAPTURE'S sigh
 The mirror blue that crested,
 Then sought, on lightest scent-wings borne,
 The glad earth, wandering over
 The pale green of the groves of Corn,
 The purple of the Clover.

—The Year cast down her gathered flowers,
And bent in wail and crying,
For all her birds had left her bowers,
And all her trees were dying ;
And, soon, the wind, through bare black bars,
Gregorian mutters chanted ;
In place of leaves, the sad-eyed stars,
Like love grown altered, haunted.

Then Nature looked *we* should obey,
As when in flowers she taught us,
And cast *our* love-blooms all away,
The fair wreaths she had wrought us ;
And looked the monk-like wind should chant
Through bare hearts that had faltered ;
And sad star-memories strangely haunt
With eyes of love grown altered.

But thinking, when it fell not so,
We must have lost our places,
Again she taught her lesson through,
Beginning with the Daisies ;
Again she tried, and yet again,—
But strangely careless thought us,—
We always left her teaching then,
When up to *change* she brought us.

O Earth, thy flowers that grow and die,
In thee are lightly rooted ;
Were ours but so, they too might lie
World-withered and polluted ;
But all secure from change and dearth,
Those flowers of love were given,
Pressed round whose roots was brought, to earth,
The soil they loved in Heaven !

No. 2.

CALLIGRAPHY.

'Twas Love one day that bade my wife
To learn Illumination,
Choosing the pages of my life
For fields of illustration ;
Her colours, tender ministries
By Angel-minds discovered,
Her brush—some Bird of Paradise
The quill dropped, as it hovered.

To work she set, a change she wrought
Upon the plain Libellum ;
Touched all with tender act and thought,
And glorified the vellum,
The poor and barren tome to fill
Her time and thought engages,
For in her heart's Scriptorium still
She planneth for its pages.

A light and glory on the book
That was so staid and solemn
Has come ; and, wheresoe'er you look,
Glows some resplendent column ;
Life's Capitals in flowers unfold,
Each, than the last, wrought better ;
And changes all to type of gold
Its every-day black letter.

Or if some page of deeper black
Prove stubborn to her will,
Through all the brightness forcing back
Its sombre darkness still,

With tender love her thoughts engage
To bring even this to order,
And lo ! she sets the mournful page
In a deep golden border !

Ah, when the Colophon is writ,
The volume closed and ended,
Unworthy letter-press, unfit
For Love's adornment splendid :—
Yet, at the last, the dark shall fade
Washed out by the Dark River,
But the rich setting Love had made,
Undimmed, last on, for ever.

No. 3.

COURTSHIP OR MARRIAGE ?

MARRIAGE is an ordered garden,
Courtship, a sweet, tangled wood ;
Marriage is the sober Summer,
Courtship, Spring, in wayward mood ;
Marriage is a deep, still river,
Courtship, a bright laughing stream ;
Marriage is a dear possession,
Courtship, a perplexing dream :
Which of these, my wife, shall be
Crowned as best by thee and me ?

Marriage is the blue day's beauty,
Courtship, the capricious morn ;
Marriage is the sweet Rose gathered,
Courtship, bud still fenced with thorn ;

Marriage is the pearl in setting,
Courtship is the dangerous dive ;
Marriage the full comb of honey,
Courtship, the new-buzzing hive :
—Which of these, dear wife, shall be
First preferred by thee and me ?



O, the tangled wood was lovely,
When we found it, in our play,
Parting curiously the branches
White with masses of the May,
Eagerly the paths exploring
Leading to we knew not where
Save that million flowers edged them,
And that bird-songs lit the air.
Thrushes' joy-notes, Philomela's
Still more exquisite despair.

How we wandered !—Now our wild wood
Has become a garden-plot,
Something missed of that strange sweetness,
In the method of our lot.
—Ordered walks, and formal borders,
For the wood-paths strange and wild ;
Rose superb, and stately lily,
Where the careless wood-flowers smiled,
—Summer, grave and sober matron,
For young Spring, the eager child :
Which, O which preferred shall be,
Twelve-years' wife, by thee and me ?

Nay, the garden has its glory,
Stately flower, and fruit mature ;
And the wild wood had its dearness,
Strange delights and wonders pure ;
And the Summer has fulfilment,
If the Spring has promise-store ;
And the river is the deeper,
If the young brook laugheth more ;
And the real joy abideth,
When the teasing dreams are o'er.

And the broad blue sky has glories,
If the morn was wildly fair ;
And the gathered rose is safer,
If the buds more piquant were ;
And the pearl is rare and precious,
If the dive was full of glee ;
And we would not change our honey,
For the flower-quest of the bee ;
—Sweet is Courtship ; sweet is Marriage :
Crown them, darling, equally !

No. 4.

LOVE AND TIME.

On seeing an engraving, Time cutting the wings of Love, with the motto :—" Omnia vincit Amor, sed Tempus Amorem vincit."

LOVE conquers all, the world declares,
And all endorse the saying,
All, from the greatest to the least,
Love's mighty power obeying ;
The lion lays aside his roar,
For thunder-roll of wooing ;
All creatures strive to tell their love
By purring, twittering, cooing.

The bees that, in the sunny hours,
About the garden wander,
Are welcomed by the love-sick flowers,
Each bee a kindly Pandar.
Big elephants and tiny mice,
Great eagle and small lory,
Giraffes and gnats, spiders and flies,
Repeat the same old story.

And man forgets his idol, self,
And comes, with big sighs laden,
To cast his person and his pelf
Before some dainty maiden.
—The lion yields his teeth and claws,
Submissive, to the charmer :
Such fangless jaws, such velvet paws,
—They never need alarm her !

Love conquers all : how true the word !
 And all for truth receive it ;
 Can Love be conquered, then? Absurd !
 No sane man would believe it.
 —And yet the moralist goes on,
 The scroll of glory rending :
*“ Love conquers all, but Time, o’er Love,
 Is Victor, ere the ending.”*

—Dearest, not so with us shall be
 The close of Love’s sweet story ;
 Nor “ discord on the music fall,”
 Nor “ darkness on the glory.”
 If Time must cut the wings of Love,
 The omen shall not grieve us,
 It tells that Love shall never rove,
 Nor have the power to leave us.

No. 5.

A WINTER GARDEN.

ALAS ! when the first frost steals down
 Upon the Summer blossoms,
 And here and there with tinge of brown
 Just stains the frailest bosoms ;
 And first unkindness, new and strange,
 Sobers the petted bowers,
 And dim suspicions first estrange
 The Summer and the Flowers.

Alas ! for surely nevermore
 Shall the old trust return,
 The Garden tries with mournful heart
 Love’s lesson to unlearn,

But cannot ;—while the cold sun stares
 Another way through clouds,—
 The Girl-flowers bend them at their prayers,
 And robe them in their shrouds.

Alas ! for when the flowers have passed,
 Their last breath sweet with pardon,
 The fair trees break their hearts, and cast
 Their glad life o'er the garden ;
 Huddled together, vine-leaves, peach,
 Three-winged laburnum, die,
 And 'midst the fallen gold of the beech
 The dark bronze pear-leaves lie.

And the mute snow steals down at night,
 And piles the fir-arms deep,
 And clothes, with spectre foliage light,
 Each leaf-lorn bough asleep ;
 And through the beech-twigs thin and brown
 The wandering snowflakes stray,—
 As white thin ghost-leaves thronging down
 Sought where their bodies lay.

Ah ! sad, and sadder yet than this,
 And sad beyond all healing,
 When o'er the heart's glad garden is
 Frost's pale death-angel stealing,
 When sudden on the stricken flowers
 Looks down an altered sky,
 And all its broken-hearted flowers
 Fall their sweet heads, to die !

Dear wife, and thus it might have been
 Where our glad garden still is,
 And frosts have stained our roses' sheen,
 And death have bent our lilies,

And, touched by cold and wintry rays,
—White on the hard brown bed,
Frail heaps been piled of rose-leaf days,
Fallen from the Rose-bush, dead !

And snow have clung about the trees,
And, cold with stiffened wing,
Sweet hopes have frozen to memories,
—Dead birds that used to sing ;—
Most sad when some faint-smiling day
The dead Sun's ghost would borrow,
And make the piled snow drip away,
And string the trees with sorrow.

This might have been ;—but frosts, too rife
In earth's most Eden bowers,
Shall only kill all insect life
Had marred the bloom, in ours ;
And old pain-showers that struck the ground
Come up in memories
To pearl with mist the buds around,
And rest upon the trees.

For Time, that thought Love's knot was loose,
And leant thereon, to try it,
Has pulled it now so fast and close,
That Death cannot untie it !
And peace is ours, and happy trust,
And hope that One above,
Who gave it, still may keep from frost
The Summer of our love.

No. 6.

“WHEN FEBRUARY COMES.”

WHEN February comes, the larks
 Break up their winter guild :
 When February comes, begin
 The blue-black rooks to build ;
 Plump feathered heaps, with wistful “cheeps,”
 Forget to ask for crumbs,
 On those first mild relenting days
 —When February comes.

When February comes, he brings
 Messages from the May ;
 Child-sunshine laughs on lawn and slope,
 Calling us out to play ;
 Suddenly rife with insect life
 The silent garden hums,
 Bees murmur in the crocus wide,
 —When February comes.

When February comes, straightway
 Our winter-heart is stirred
 By sweetest possibilities
 Of leaf, and flower, and bird ;
 With ruddy flush gray copses blush
 Howe’er the dim sky glooms,
 Fearlessly pæans forth the thrush
 —When February comes.

We peer into the ruddy quick
 And note the red buds swell,
 Hopelessly hopeful we half look
 For gold-green gems, as well,

In daring moods for violet buds
Our search audacious roams ;
Such hintings sweet of Spring there are,
When February comes.

Yea, February-flowers are found
That laugh in Winter's face,
—Though fearfully nun-snowdrops pale
Steal forth with timid grace :—
Hepatica and crocus rare
Flash from their winter tombs,
A primrose here, a wallflower there,
—When February comes.

Fair hazel-tassels droop about
The Copse, still bare and dead ;
Twin emerald honeysuckle-leaves
Alight, with wings outspread ;
In chestnut woods full glistening buds
Foretell the leafy domes ;
A general instinct dawns of life
—When February comes.

When February comes, the heart
Stirs with a magic glow,
While Nature tunes her instruments
With prelude sweet and low ;
Poesy's rage, grown poor, in Age,
Must rob Youth's royal tombs ;
Yea, Beggars silken rags must don
—When February comes.

When February comes, and lo,
Life's love-sap brims the year ;
My garland of the buds, I weave
To crown a forehead dear :

Grave days are ours, but birds and flowers
 Start freshly from their tombs ;
 And Love slides back to blossom-time,
 —When February comes.

No. 7.

THE PRIMROSE.

ALL the green leaves of last year,
 —They are dead ;
 Seaweed-like the branches drear
 Are outspread ;
 First, September loosed their hold
 On the trees,
 Then October drave their gold
 On the breeze,
 —When November's mists had cleared,
 All had fled.

But a Primrose nursed her buds
 All the while,
 Freightened by the bankrupt woods
 —Pile on pile ;—
 Fiercely roared the winds,
 Scattering all
 Summer's sunny leaves
 Past recall.
 —Then, the Primrose lit the wreck
 With her smile.

So the winds for us have strewn
 Ruthlessly
 Many a leaf familiar grown
 'Gainst the sky ;

But the Primrose of our love,
 Sweet my Wife,
 'Midst the hurrying winds of death
 Keeps its life ;
 And the fiercest winter winds
 Pass it by.

No. 8.

DISSOLVING VIEWS.

LOVE's magic lantern 'gins to cast
 The round disk of another year
 On Life's white sheet. And lo, the last
 Is slowly growing fainter. Dear !
 Together still, in weal or woe,
 We watch the new sharp picture grow.

They come, and pass, the vivid years :
 The lines grow dim, the colours fade ;
 Now laughter moves us ; and now, tears ;
 Now sunshine glows ; now gathers shade.
 Together, be it well or ill,
 We wait for all,—together still.

What pictures with the past year die ?
 —A little form * with netted hair ;
 A little Church : a Rectory ;
 A little white cross imaged there :
 Together, in those days of grief ;
 Together, in its sweet relief.

* At Streatham, a sweet maid-child, of three years, given over, but given back. *Laus Deo.*

Again,—a waste of wide gray sea *
 Deepening into blue, warm heights
 Haze-softened : Spain, and Sicily :
 Greece, and dream-Venice. Strange delights !
 —That doubly sweet and dear had proved,
 Together seen, together loved.

Como, Lugano, Switzerland ;
 —A silent week with strangers. Then
 Great yearnings for the pale-faced strand,
 And for the English Home again.



—The happy greeting ; and, once more,
 Together linked, as heretofore.

* A solitary voyage, in the boat "Morocco," for health, 1872.

—What will this new year's pictures be?
We cannot tell; we need not know:
Our Father weighs out heedfully
Each portion meet, of bliss or woe;
Shall we not dare of good or ill?
Thus whispering, "Together still!"

No. 9.

THE SUNDIAL.

"Horas non numero nisi serenas."

(*The motto on the Dial in Sackville College.*)

"I NUMBER none save the sunny hours,"
Declareth the Dial olden;
For its index fails in the gloom and showers,
And marks but the moments golden;
A lesson it is for the sorrowful race
Of enduring men recorded,
Who forget the glad hours of Life's Dial-face,
While the sad are most miserly hoarded.
Aye, the sunny days we forget too soon,
But the dull, dark days remember;
And "the bean-flowers boon, and the blackbird's tune,"
Soon pass out of mind; "and May and June"
Are forgot, in the gray November:
If "it rains, and the day is dark and dreary,"
How ready we are at repining:
Nor look, when the watch seems darksome and weary,
For "the cloud with the silver lining."
Ah, love, let us number life's golden hours,
Not forgetting its days of sadness;
For the Dial's choice may not yet be ours
To count but the moments of gladness:

—How bright they *have* been, the bright hours of life,
And gladdest of all the glad blisses,
The wonderful day when "*My Husband!*" "*My Wife!*"
From lip went to lip with the kisses.

"The good days they die, but die also the bad,"
And which shall we fondest cherish?
Shall we call to our mind but the sullen and sad,
While of joys the remembrance may perish?
Nay, let us remember the young days that, now,
Are numbered with things that are olden;
And smooth out the lines of the time-wearied brow
With recalling the times that were golden.

With recalling the times? Ours are golden yet,
With the richness of Autumn's ripe splendour;
And the fruit is, how sweet! though we may not forget
The flush of the Spring blossom tender.
"I number none save the sunny hours,"
—Not for Earth is this motto engraven,
It points to the Land of all sunshine and flowers,
—To the Dial, unclouded, of Heaven.

No. 10.

"THE SAME OLD STORY."

How fast our Easters seem to go!
How long our Lents appear!
How quick to fall the bloom, how slow
Again to reappear!
It seems such a long time to wait,
All till another year!

The blackcap sang a little while,
But soon became a rover ;
The thrush, that February woke,
Flits silent through the covert ;
The nightingale just stirred our breasts,
And straight his song was over !

The flowers, they hardly touched their prime,
Before their prime had fled ;
How long before our bulbs would flower !
How soon the flowers were dead !
And the keen crimson quits the rose
Ere the brief bloom is shed.

The dark-blue swallows touch the pools,
And straight are on the wing :
The year seems chiefly Winter days,
With just a hint of Spring ;
A few bright hours the bee can work,
But all the year can sting.

And so it is—'tis an old tale—
That sweet is always brief ;
The thorn at any time is found,
Rarely the flower and leaf :
Joy's holidays soon pass ; not so
The long school-months of grief.

And lovers' ecstasies depart,
And love's despairs as well ;
And after one day's golden joy,
Mute hangs the wedding-bell ;
The strangeness and the wonder goes—
Ah, what remains to tell ?

Not much ;—again, the tale is old ;
Not much ;—full well we know,

My wife and I, what can remain
 'Midst joys that come and go.
 They, as they just appear and fade,
 Its permanency shew.

True wedded love : that light abides
 While meteors flash and die ;
 This hath a never-silent song
 When all the songsters fly,
 Can crowd with bloom the branch that seemed
 Never so bare and dry.

What more ? Is it the same old tale ?
 Indeed, I fear it is :
 Yet I but treat my brooding mate
 As the true thrush treats his :
 That the old love-notes *are* unchanged,
 Her heart exults in this.

The same old story ; shall I fear
 The well-worn notes to trill,
 With hoarser accents year by year,
 And ever-lessening skill ?
 With this plea only,—that it is
 The *same old story still !*

NO. II.

AMARANTH.

THE Christmas rose is passing now,
 The year is in the Spring ;
 The copse has donned a ruddy glow,
 The thrush essays to sing ;
 The Year begins its tale to tell
 As though a novel thing.

But perfectly by heart we know
Each chapter and each page,
From the first streak of snowdrop snow
To the last gray green-gage ;
The glee and frolic the Year had
When life was young, and fresh, and glad
The grave hush of its age.

To each new heart, how new and bright
The Year's old fairy-tale ;
Each opening bud a fresh delight,
Each wren a nightingale ;
A world of birds'-nests and glad flowers,
Of sunshine laughing through brief showers ;
Not of birds flown, nor leafless bowers ;
Nor wearisome, nor stale.

To me the tale is not twice told
Only, but older far :
Yes, 'tis recorded fifty-fold
By Time, gray Registrar :
Yet is one thing still fresh, in life,
The love of a true-hearted wife ;
In clouded skies, one Star.

AFTER TEN YEARS.

TEN years ago ! That was the Spring,
It is Midsummer now,
And have we lost, or have we gained,
Since that ten years ago ?
Life's Litanies are ever wove
Of mingled tears and praise,
And thorns have ever grown with flowers
Since Eden days.

Ten years ago ! what fears and hopes
What waverings and trusts,
What vehemence of sun or wind,
What trifling gleams and gusts,
What changes and what fixedness,
What laughter and what tears ;
—What tender kindnesses of God,
In ten long years.

Ten years ago ! What loss or gain ?
Do we lament the Spring ?
Has, from the deepening Summer hues,
That *first* light taken wing ?
Nay, the first trembling snowdrop, plucked
Ten solemn years ago,
Still lives, though Summer flowers have brought
Their glory too.

Ten years ago ! We meet, my Wife,
Beside this ten years' stone,
To thank God with a "Hitherto,"
For all that He has done ;
Nor need we fear, upon the faith
Of these "ten years ago,"
To add our heartfelt thanks for all
That He will do.

THE SILVER WEDDING.

IN Solomon's days they held silver cheap,
Just fitted for menials' use ;
For all things were golden in Solomon's days,
In riches and glory profuse :

But the years passed by, and the gold went too,
They cared for the silver at last ;
When brazen for golden the spoiler had left,
And Solomon's glory had passed.

Our "Solomon's days," they are over now,
And past is the golden glow ;
Our "golden wedding," we kept it once,
Five and twenty years ago :
Yet silver, they say, is than gold more fair,
And we read that the Crown of Glory
God gives, in the stead of the golden hair,
Is fashioned of silver hoary.

Then let us the silver return hold dear
Of the vanished splendour olden,
Of the days which but once in a lifetime here
Can be fitly entitled "golden" !
The silver shall warm into gold again
In the city of golden gladness,
And old things grow new in that radiance of Spring
That shall banish the Winter sadness !



THE FALSEHOOD OF EXTREMES :

OR,

The Solitary.

THE FALSEHOOD OF EXTREMES:

OR,

The Solitary.

CHAPTER I.—HIS ILLUMINATING.

“How sweet the air is! How fair the scene!
I wish I had as lovely a green
To paint my landscapes and my leaves.
How the swallows twitter under the eaves!
There, now, there is one in her nest;
I can just catch a glimpse of her head and breast,
And will sketch her thus in her quiet nook,
For the margin of my Gospel Book.”—GOLDEN LEGEND.

EARTH's ever-changing Drama has but one and the same background. The Actors come and go, but the Scenery remains the same. And the meditations and the acts of men, hundreds of years ago, were set in the amphitheatre of the same calm hills, and took place among the same winding rivers which, at the present day, last unmoved and unchanged throughout those changes and chances of this mortal life that alternate among them.

The West of England, in the Middle Ages, looked, accordingly, much the same as the West of England at the present day. And though our characters be the men of long ago, our hills and villages and valleys will be little different from those which now charm us with their loveliness.

On the slope of one of the hills which draw off from the Wye there stood a Monastery. No traces now remain of its site, and but little record of its existence. One among the many religious houses which the zeal, or rather the avarice, of bluff Hal despoiled, or allowed to be despoiled, it passed

away from the face of the land, probably, by degrees, and by piecemeal destruction. Its marble pavement is, by some, thought to lie in the aisles, and within the Chancel, of the



Church hard by its supposed site; and the heavy carved oak railings of the Altar are thought to have formed the balustrades of part of a staircase of the Monastery. Several of the cottages have, at their doorsteps, and in the gardens, quaint old writhing bits of sculpture, or huge grotesque

heads, and relics of rude Norman work. Indeed, a very old wall of a farm-house in the village is built almost mainly of such zig-zagged, dog-toothed, billeted fragments.

Great elms and stately oaks and hoary poplars now gather or straggle about the slope on which those ancient walls once probably stood. The cloud of "caws" that rises above them in the morning, and settles upon them against the yellow evening sky, are now the *Matin* and *Vesper* bell of that quiet valley. And, for *Compline*, the mellow, muffled fluting of the brown owls, or the shriller cry of their white brother as he flits, soft and silent as a huge moth, through the night, these, together with the nightingale's song, are the night call to prayer, now that the Monastery bell is dumb.

All was far otherwise at the time of which I write. Not but that stately trees, and melodious notes, the sobbing of doves, and the owl's cry, and the wood-lark's singing, were then as rife as now—nay, more rife. But, where the cattle graze and the sheep-bell tinkles, the old massive gray building made itself the centre of the landscape; the centre and keynote of sight and sound. The monotony of the bell, recurring for its brief period, at certain definite hours, seemed to give the time to the careless ordered minstrelsy of the woods and vale. And the chant of the bare-headed monks brake at times through their chapel windows, to supplement or interpret the ceaseless *song without words* that came from earth, and air, and trees, and river.

With the monks as a whole we shall have little to do. Most of our time will be spent in the cell, or, as he himself called it, "*Scriptorium*," of the Monk Ernestus. "Nearly every monastery was provided with its *Scriptorium*." There the monks sat in silent society, busied in copying or illuminating manuscripts. But the Monk Ernestus, we learn, had sought and obtained, as a special favour, leave to make a peculiar *Scriptorium* of his own little cell.

We read of the severity or the conviviality of some

Monastic life. Neither of these characters would justly apply to the days of the Monk Ernestus. There was nothing of gloom in his life, in which there was yet no glare. It seemed lit, as it were, by the softest glow of a June evening—that most delicious time of the year—and it could thus afford to miss the broad radiance of the mid-day sun. No sudden or excessive shocks of joy or sorrow brought any day into violent relief. No household ties chequered the hours with anxiety or delight. The strong light and shadow of life were wanting ; but the Monk scarcely knew of these, and was content with the peaceful, even, half-tint which dwelt on his days, each of which was so like another.

He passionately loved his Art ; and he would sit and design and paint sometimes from the early morning until the last rose flush of the sky passed off into gray. He would never copy and glorify any mere secular work : only the Holy Scriptures, and the Service books, Missals, Lectionaries, Psalters, the Hymnarium, or the Antiphonarium, and the Book of Hours for Private Devotion, and the Breviary Book. He would also admit a treatise of an early Father to his catalogue ; or some ancient single hymn—some watchword of the Faith. And, imperceptibly, this constant study of the Bible, and of the ancients, infused into his faith more of the early purity than was common in those days. And these books only would he set in those rich and luminous Border settings ; work thought out and finished with such care and pains that a Gospel took him a year where another would complete it in a month. And the works of the Monk Ernestus were famous, not only in England and in France, but even at Rome. In taste and execution they were, as nearly as could be, perfect.

I must bring you now into his cell, or miniature Scriptorium.

It was nothing at all like that you would imagine a monk's cell to be : no bare stone walls, and atmosphere of

gloom ; no dungeon-like sternness. True, all the furniture was of the plainest quality, rude deal ; and but scant in quantity. Yet the little cell looked bright and pleasant.

It faced the west ; and, as it is now evening, a golden glow comes in through the window-bars, and is cut by their broad shadow into warm squares on the opposite wall. The room—for it could hardly be called more than one room—was divided by a semi-partition, and the same window gave light to both compartments. On one side was a low, hard bed—there being no general Dormitory in this Monastery ; in the other compartment, or sitting-room, were strewed or arranged the materials for the Chrysographer. These alone would have made the room look bright ; work in different stages of progress lay on shelves provided for the purpose ; a gorgeous Missal or two—purchased or exchanged by the Monk himself, or taken from the Library common to the monks—lay on the little table ; on a desk or easel shone a half-finished page that seemed lit with a *visible* glory of inspiration. Some sketches of birds, insects, flowers, lay also on the table, evidently taken from nature during the Monk's meditative rambles. And the simple inmate thought it a not unbecoming luxury to adorn even the walls with the products of his pencil. From aught of profane adornment he would have shrunk, but these were but holy meditations, fixed and glorified, that he placed before his eyes for their constant refreshment, and, he hoped, for edification too. There

“The Maid-Mother, by a crucifix,
In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx,
Sat smiling, Babe in arm.

“Or in a clear walled city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily ;
An angel looked at her.”

Even the grim window-bars were made somewhat beautiful with emblems, monograms, and twisted work of gold, and blue, and scarlet. The Monk's mind, fertile in colour and form, multiplied its offspring of richness and beauty everywhere throughout the narrow compass of his cell.

We may fancy a picture, beautiful, characteristic, and complete, if we summon up before our thought the cell, with its jewel-richness of colour, and the inmate at his work : his gray garb, and the broad light and shadow of the thick folds and deep hood ; the bald head, with the dark fringe surrounding it, and just lit by the warm flood that pours in through the window, by which he is sitting in order to pick up the last shafts from the sun's quiver ; these sort well with the high forehead, the pale face, and somewhat sunken eyes, with their bright light and thoughtful look. See, he pauses and looks up from his work, and turns towards the window, facing the sunset, in a dreamy, conscious unconsciousness ; he is not exactly looking at it, but the satisfaction of it is present to his mind. The sun sinks lower ; he rises and goes to the window, leaning against the wall, and looking out.

He may well linger there often, as he does, contemplating that landscape. The window is set in a corner turret, and looks full towards the Wye, which sleeps beneath the sloping hill on which the building stands, and passes on a mile into the distance. Then it is lost behind a lofty wood, that steps down to the very water's edge. Near the river and just seen amid trees, rises the tall spire of the village church ; and on the opposite bank the water is edged by cottages which dot the slope as it ascends into another hill, leaving the broad river in the valley between.

The valley widens on each side of the river towards the distance, into an undulation of meadow land, dotted with sheep. Belts of wood close these in, and here and there a

cottage, with its orchard, varies the quiet fields. Hill overlaps hill in the distance until the "Black mountains" close all in on the far horizon. Dimly distinct they appear against the warm rose sky, in which one bright star trembles.

It is a summer evening, and peaceful exceedingly. The leaves of an ash near the Monastery are cut out clear and dark against the sky ; and overhead creaking flocks of wild ducks pass against the dusking gray-blue, which the sun has left quite ; now and then a sharp, wild cry from some one of their array gives a strange, sudden break to the intense quiet of the scene, enhancing it by that momentary interruption.

The day has been exceedingly sultry, and now that it falls something of a rustling whisper arises in the heavy leafage around. It is a sort of audible satisfaction among the trees as the cool evening gathers on their greenery.

The Monk Ernestus leaves the cell, and passes through the long staircase, across the Quadrangle, out at the little side door into the wood.

We will not join him yet, but loiter in his steps, and notice some few of the characteristics of the Building.

CHAPTER II.—HIS VISITOR.

"Is this a time for moonlight dreams,
For Fancy with her shadowy toys,
Ærial hopes and pensive joys,
While souls are wandering far and wide,
And curses swarm on every side?"

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

LEAVING the Monk's cell, we come into a long, narrow passage, lit here and there from above, along which, on each side, were ranged other cells of the monks. At one end of it glowed a "deep-set window, stained and traced,"

with its "slow-flaming crimson fires." The tracery of the window, as the twilight came on, seemed almost black, but the colour rather burned richer and more intense behind the dark, fretted framework. A staircase that led into a hall ended the passage ; into this hall other long passages converged, for,

" Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
That overvaulted grateful gloom."

Out of this hall opened doors into the Buttery, the cellars, the Refectory ; and across a small green quadrangle you passed, through the cloisters beyond, to the Chapel.

These cloisters were a favourite resort of the Monk Ernestus ; and now that the hour of meditative wanderings among the chancelled woods is at an end for him, we meet him again in their subdued light. These cloisters were just the place you would choose for tranquil, almost luxurious, meditation. The wide square of smooth green sward which they shut in—over which the shadows of the turrets and pinnacles of the buildings had lengthened, encroaching with their cool gray on the warm gold-green sunlight—slept now almost in total shade. Just an edge of the living radiance was left, dividing the mass of shadow from the sunlit aisle of the cloisters ; and on the pavement, along its darkening length, lay, at intervals, ruddy trefoil-headed slants of glory, in sets of three parallels—the centre being the tallest. Through the fretted triple windows they came, and lay across the pavement, and, at right angles to this, glowed half-way up the wall—showing thus a bend in their midst, as though just being folded up to be laid aside. As you stood at one end of this passage and saw this alternate dusk and glory, and the arched groining overhead passing into soft gloom, and watched the Monk, with bent head, slowly approaching—passing now into indistinctness, and now into intense glows and deep shadows—you would have imagined it

possible to have paced and mused along that luxury of solemn quiet to the hollow resounding of your solitary foot-step, aye, till the moon rose over the long, gray roof, and cast triple slants of white light, in place of the warm glow Ebony and silver had then alternated across that long passage, for the orange light and mellow shade. Almost too lonely, after a time, yet strangely lovely, would the cloisters have been in such aspect, while slowly stole the "silver flame" across and along the dark.

The Monk Ernestus has drawn near to where we are standing during our reverie ; he has passed through the narrow, echoing side-passage, across the small quadrangle into the hall, up the staircase, and then along the dark corridor into his little cell again.

We will follow, only lingering behind a moment, because the Organist Monk, who passed a little while ago into the Chapel, is rolling waves of muffled melody along the now dark arches of the deserted cloisters.

The Monk Ernestus had not sat long in his cell before a sharp tap came at the door. As it opened to let in a Stranger, you might have fancied that a sound as of revelry echoed up the staircase and along the passage. The Monk Ernestus crossed himself and sighed as he heard the sound. The Stranger was also a Monk—tall and cowed, so that his face gleamed out of the hood as out of a cavern. His garb was entirely black ; and there seemed something weird in his look as he sat down, silent, after the first salutation, confronting his host. Ernestus was not unused to visits from stranger monks, English or foreign—his fame being, as I have said, limited neither to his Monastery nor to his Island. He said, at last—

"Brother, wert thou the visitor to my cell this morning, during my absence, leaving this token"—pointing to a cross, rudely fashioned of briar, bound with grass—"of thy return?"

"I came this morning, and I return at night," answered the foreigner, for such he seemed to be.

"Hadst thou business with the Monk Ernestus?" inquired this latter.

"I am a stranger to this Monastery and this Country," replied his guest; "I came hither, seeking that I do not find."

"There is," said Ernestus, "food and lodging for the stranger within our walls."

"I never sought monastery for these," answered the Monk; "I can lodge under the sky, as often did my Master, and follow His example of fasting, that I may the better feed others. What mean these sounds of uproar and laughter that fill up the pauses of our speech?"

"Alas!" Ernestus said, "they tell their own tale. Too little of fasting and discipline is there in this society, and too much of carnal delight and sensual gratification. The hole in our garment is too apparent for words of mine to darn. What I now say, I speak not in boast, but in humble justice to them, and to my unworthy self—there are, besides this, but six cells where there is fasting and discipline to balance the misrule that hath emptied the remainder."

The Dark Monk leant forward from the dark corner wherein he sat, while the moonlight that now flooded the room fell on the pale features that looked out of the shadowing cowl.

"Brother," he said, "I came to these walls wherein they who dwell are set apart for the special service of God, for the denial of their own lusts and likings, for the chastening and subjecting of the flesh, and for the freeing of the wings of the soul, that it may the more singly and unrestrainedly soar to the Creator. I came to where the very walls promised a gathering of Saints—a rehearsal of Heaven. Methought here to refresh myself, not with perishing food and earthly rest, but with high and holy converse—with spiritual

refreshment that might content and invigorate the soul. I sought every cell ; but what I sought I found not. Everywhere have I found much of carnal delight and sensual gratification ; nowhere the trace of that conversation which is in Heaven. Yet for this I yearned ; and, behold, my soul is still an hungred !”

“Yea,” replied the Monk Ernestus ; “my heart echoes thy words, and weepeth tears of blood. Shall we not at least converse to our edifying, in the night, if thou hast fasted during the day ? Thou didst see in this cell tokens—would they were better fulfilled !—of a more spiritual conversation.”

But the Stranger repeated, “Everywhere have I found much of carnal delight and sensual gratification ; nowhere the trace of that converse which is heavenly.”

A look of wonder and sorrow came into the face of the Monk Ernestus. “Yea,” said he, “little may my life match with my painted aspirations and designed devotions, with my patient and daily labour in my cell, while others take their pleasure. With fasting and prayer do I offer up the best of my mind and my hand to my Master ; multiplying His words, in the setting of His works. My best is nothing ; yet thy censure is not deserved by me.”

“Brother,” and the Monk laid his hand upon his arm, and looked, with an almost wistful tenderness in the stern eyes, into his,—“Brother, beloved in the Lord, right well and Christianly hast thou answered ; nevertheless, thou shalt yet confess my words true. I came this morning into thy cell, for the door stood open. I saw thy Art, which is thy god, portrayed upon the walls, hiding the bars of the window, strewn on the table, heaped on the shelves. A voluptuous feasting of the eye appeared in a drapery here, a colour there, in the whole disposition of the rooms. I turned the pages of the Gospels, of the Missals ; I found beauty of form and colour the principal, and the sacred Text

the second thing in all. Yea, it seemed to me used but as a riband wherewith to tie thy flowers. Needed not to ask how this Solitary passed the chief of his time ; needed not to ask what was his god—I mean the thing most in his thoughts. Little time can there be for prayer and praise beyond the stated hours ; little season for holy study and heavenly meditation. Even in thy walks thy mind must be busy, not with heaven, but in margins of vellum, in cunning fancies, in gleaning of flowers, or birds, or butterflies. From thy work thou risest to prayers, with thy last touches yet sweet in thy mind ; and from thy prayers thou hastenest to the page, as if to recover time wasted. The eye is never denied, nor the appetite for mere beauty, O thou, pledged to strictest self-denial for thy Lord's sake, for the mortifying of the flesh, which indeed one way thou crossest, but another way thou feedest to the full ! Is riot in the sense of Taste the only excess ? Shall not the full feeding of a gluttonous eye, the always indulging the mind's natural craving—shall not this, too, be held a carnal delight, a sensual gratification ? Those other monks care not for thy delight, nor thou for theirs. Each is led captive by his own peculiar lust.”

“Thou judgest me hardly, my brother,” the Monk Ernestus said. “Cassiodorus, the Calabrian, hath written of my art and employment, that, ‘In this exercise the mind is instructed in Holy Scripture, and it is a homily unto all whomsoever these books may reach. It is preaching with the hand, the fingers becoming tongues ; it publisheth in silence the words of salvation ; it warreth with the demon with pen and ink.’ Further, he saith, ‘A Recluse, seated in his chair, transcribing, travels into all lands without leaving it ; and the labour of his hands is felt where he is not.’ May I not, therefore, brother, be indeed doing all these things, not to my delight, but to God's glory ?”

“Thou mayest, indeed ; but dost thou so do it ? Nay,

my brother ; I judge thee not hardly. I watched thee in the wood ; thy inclinations, if heavenly, needed but a flower, or a cobweb, for a sudden colon, or full stop. And since thou art the Monk Ernestus, I have heard of thee from many, and misjudge thee not. Art thou preaching to others by these fantastic bars, these bedaubed walls, this carving and drapery ? Bear with me while I set before thee thy life. What meaneth thy seclusion from the world, and thy solitude from earth's ties, in the Monastery walls ? Doth it not mean sterner self-denial than that of other men, the crossing of thy natural inclinations, the bringing into bondage thy, but for thy vow, *innocent* desires ; the renouncing of, but for thy vow, *harmless* pleasures ; the making Earth indeed a wilderness, that thou mayest the more stedfastly and sweetly desire the Canaan beyond ? This was thy life set aside to be ; and, lo ! what hast thou made it ? Is it not a selfish seclusion from household care and anxiety—a twilight calm, through which thou mayest untroubled pursue what is the darling of thy heart ? The world goes on, with its cares and its troubles, about thee ; men are born and die ; and there is bitter mourning, and wild crime, and rude uproar, and laughter, and tears. But all cometh hushed to thee, shut out from thy kind, with no strong loves whose severance shall make thee mourn ; with no events save the finding of a new colour or another flower—painting, reading, praying, in a calm luxurious dream. Of the six thou namest, five, in like manner, worship study and intellectual delight ; one hath music for his god. And all these imagine that which they are doing for themselves to be done for the Master. Nay, my brother, carnal delight and sensual gratification reign supreme in this Brotherhood. If my words be not true, prove them false. If this thy assiduity be only or chiefly zeal for God, turn thee awhile from this to other work, most like thy Master's labours, that lieth about thee on all sides undone. As I passed through the hamlet I

found the hungry, the sick, the sad, and the sinful ; and amid this disease there appeared no physician. Yea, with a Gilead close at hand, no balm did I find ! Men wondered at my words if I asked who came among them, to care for the body or the soul ; for there is among them no one of the secular Clergy, and the parish Church is in ruin—the Monastery having swallowed up the tithes. I leave thee, brother. In some things said I may have erred. Pardon mine infirmity. But think on my words ; and looking on thine abode and on thy garb, ask thy soul this one question, *‘Is my life a life of self-denial for God ?’* So act as thou shalt find the answer.”

The Monk Ernestus looked up after a time from his reverie : the moonlight still flooded the room, but he was sitting in it alone.

CHAPTER III.—HIS SACRIFICE.

“ Yes—let them pass without a sigh,
And if the world seem dull and dry,
Bethink thee what thou art and where,
A sinner in a life of care.”

CHRISTIAN YEAR.

“ A good time, was it not ? my kingly days ?
—’Tis done and past ; ’twas right, my instinct said :
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray.”

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

THE dim dawn had come after the moonlight had passed away, and given a weird, chill look to the deserted Cloisters. But the sun had risen upon this faint half-light, and filled the heavens with pale gold and pale blue. The cell of the Monk Ernestus had lost the silver light and deep shadows of the night ; and now the mellow morning filled the room, and shewed all its details clearly.

The Monk had not retired to his couch. Something of a blight seemed, since yesterday morning, to have come over a life hitherto so tranquil and peaceful. The Matins bell rang; but the Solitary had been kneeling on the marble pavement, within the Chapel, for some hours before its summons. And, the Service over, he proceeded slowly at once to his cell. Until this morning he had never left the Ante-chapel before the last notes of the out-voluntary had ceased their reverberations through the interlacing arches of the roof. He could think best of his painting, and mentally design most originally, listening to those mellow tones and deep rollings. The half-tint cast over all, the shadowy massing of the groups, the soaring columns and the springing arches—all these were so many allies to his imagination. He found it hard, often—'twas true enough—to banish such thoughts from his very prayers. But, these being over, he felt now that too often he *had* let his mind return, as though freed, to his beloved Art—"His beloved *Art*!" there it was. Not his beloved *Master*. Alas! was not much of that the Stranger had said indeed true?

How sweetly the sunbeams stole in slantwise now upon the green sward; and see, one single crimson sweetbriar rose they had found straggling in, set against a background of dark, clean stone. What a broad, pearly shadow it threw, and how the crimson glowed, as a warm window in a gray aisle. The Monk lingered, and was treasuring the gem of light and colour for future setting in some precious volume. But a sudden change came over his face, and he started as a wrongdoer. "Yea," he muttered, as he passed into the hall, "what self-denial is there in this my life? Had I the world to choose from, and merely pleasure to consult, I would choose my palette and my cell."

He went into the little cell, and sat down, somewhat wearily, on his low bench. The sun was veering round now, within range of the turret in which his window was

set. Just a long rule of light pierced beside the mullion and glorified the room. It rested full on one of the saintly paintings on the wall. The Virgin with the Babe smiled with a sweet calmness that was made almost supernatural in the radiance; and a golden rod lay across the table and flashed from the burnished gold of a priceless manuscript thereon. "Was this foreign saint's work also a sensual delight?" the Monk said, almost bitterly.

Nearer the window his little desk and working stool were placed—his carefully prepared pigments beside them. That long sunbeam lay right across his yesterday's work. There it was. He remembered with what a lingering reluctance he had quitted it; with what eagerness he would, but for last night, have returned to it now. Two sides of a border he had nearly finished. He had left off at the twenty-seventh verse of the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. He had woven a little nest into the grass on the ground, showing the eggs within; above it, a lark that had quitted it was soaring, singing, upward toward the sky. The lark was completed, all but one wing; and the gold grounding left off unfinished, just where it met his head. It looked very lovely now; and the brushes lay ready, and the gold and the colours on the slab.


The Monk had risen, and was looking at it mournfully, wistfully. What a change since yesterday! Could it be a right and necessary change, that seemed to threaten an overshadowing sadness upon his hitherto beautiful, peaceful life, if not the darkening it altogether?

"Surely," said he, half aloud, "the Stranger was over-strict. Why should I heed him? That the work is beautiful will not the less render it acceptable to God. And for me, it seems my very life!" He mused in silence, still looking at the painting. He stood, scarcely moving, for more than an hour. Then he said, "The Monk was right. If it be my *chief* joy and delight, it is also my god."



He looked up with eyes in which tears had been ; for, having no ties, no loves, no business or pleasure of the world, his Art had become to him his love, his wife, his child ; and now these, in one day, were about to die. Nevermore should those last western rays be gathered up eagerly at that turret window for the completing the petal of a flower or the feather of a bird ; nevermore the morning greet his fresh return to his delicious toil. Henceforth his life was changed ; henceforth the mellow, soft lustre had left it, and instead must come the chill, hard gray of dawn. Hitherto—he saw it now—life had been a sensual and carnal pleasing of self. Henceforth, with God's grace helping him, it should be a sternly self-denying pleasing of God. He had felt—reluctantly felt—last night that it would come to this. Since, too, he had tried to argue away what all the while he believed to be true. He had tried to feel anger at the want of charity of the Stranger. But his conscience had at last gone over to the Stranger's side. The truth had stood as a stern, impassive rock, and the weak waves of his mind had wearied them on it in vain.

They drew off now, and gave over the conflict. That last hour's musing had finished all. And now the sadness in his face changed to a kind of stern, strong joy, as he gave up, for his Master's sake, all that had made that solitary life bright and sunny. The full sunbeams poured on the wall as he took the pictures down : carefully, reverently ;—he would not destroy, only lay them aside. 'Twould be some time, he thought, ere he ceased the mechanical glance towards them. But then he would not be often in his cell now, excepting on his knees. Even at such times, now he recalled, wandering looks had stolen towards the wall. The black bars came out rather sullenly and gloomily when he had removed the colour and design that had made them bright as Aaron's rod. He shut the books up one by one, and piled them on the table. His



chemicals, and those glowing colours that had resulted from them, these he gathered together, also those cunning brushes and the piled sketches, and put all away in a chest that he would never need to open. The other simple adornments—drapery, and the like—these went in with them. The last trace of the old life was his little desk, and the yet open volume upon it : half, clad in splendour ; half, smooth, clean, inviting vellum. That smear of the gold would never spread further ; that quick-beating wing would never find its fellow ; the sticks and twigs of the nest would remain on the white vellum, and never repose in a background.

“ *Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee.*” That was a good text for a Colophon ;—not at the end of a volume, but at the close of his Art. The “ *all* ” might not in itself be much ; but it *was* his *all* : it was much to *him*—fame, occupation, pleasure, went with it. Remember this, if it seem a false sentimentality that thus describes the Monk’s sacrifice as made at such a pang.

The book was closed now, and laid aside in the chest ; and that concluded the matter. How changed the cell looked ! How bare the walls, how empty the tables and shelves—just what you would imagine a monk’s cell now. “ And that is as it should be,” said the Monk Ernestus, as the thought crossed his mind.

One sole ornament, if you call it so, he fastened on the wall, where the paintings had been : it was the little briar cross left by the stranger Monk in his room.

CHAPTER IV.—HOW HE KEPT HIS RESOLVE.

“Come, Resignation, spirit meek,
And let me kiss thy placid cheek,
And read in thy pale eye serene
Their blessing, who by faith can wean
Their hearts from sense, and learn to love
God only, and the joys above.”—CHRISTIAN YEAR.

THE Monk Ernestus was, from that day, a changed man. It was as though he had stripped the walls of his heart of all bright hues, as well as the walls of his cell; for, always of a kindly disposition, he had been hitherto harmlessly genial, and a favourer of due relaxation and innocent mirth. But now, such a hold had the conversation of that June night taken on him, that you had scarce known him for the same man. He seemed to shrink from any, however innocent, laughter and jest; his fasts were long, and his food always coarse; his eyes seldom raised from the ground; all pleasure, all indeed that was not tinged with sadness, seemed now a carnal pleasing of self. “I must redeem the time,” he murmured to himself; “I have loitered and slumbered upon the road; I must run now where others may walk; I must leave flowers ungathered that to others are allowed.”

And he kept to his resolve. The past was past to him, except for sorrowful thought thereon. Long into the night did the moon, flooding into that turret chamber, find the Monk upon his knees, and that after a day of anxiety and toil; for now the Monk Ernestus became well known in the hamlet, not as a star in the sky of Art, but as a dear and household name. “When the ear heard him, then it blessed him; and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him. Because he delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him,

and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. He was eyes to the blind, and feet was he to the lame." These words of Job describe well the Pastor's work, and this work Ernestus had taken up with no faltering hand.

He wondered more, the more he came to see of the world without the Monastery walls, at what a selfish, luxurious life that old life had been. Day after day had passed, and a quiet song of content and self-sufficient enjoyment had run through the hours. Sorrow and sighing had gone on about him; crime had run wild in the abodes within his sight and hearing; while he went on painting so calmly, and with such a twilight and unruffled life, in his little cell. He had looked at those cottages—in which he was now a part of the life—as being but a detail of the loveliness that pleased his eye, as he watched the broad massing of the shadow and light, in that peaceful landscape, at the sunset hour. The thatched homesteads that dotted the hill or edged the river, with their quiet look, and gray ascending smoke, and bits of bright garden, and apple-orchards, and setting of elms,—these he had but regarded as a fair picture. He had never thought of the solemn human story that was going on under each of those roofs; he had never considered that here were Immortal Souls running to seed, and that for want of a Gardener. It had never occurred to him, as he illuminated a border to the words, how little the *meaning* of them had gone home to his heart: "I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." How he had admired the beauty of these passages! How he had worked, thought and hand, to adorn them! But how little had their real teaching and sweetness touched his heart, while, surrounded by the beauty in his cell, he had painted until the sun dipped behind the hills, and then had

leant in a reverie, drinking in beauty from the window ! Or he had passed out into the wood, to hear the nightingale's introit between the Service of the day and the Service of the night, and to think luxuriantly of the Rest to come, which, he *now* felt, ought to be the crown of *labour* here.

But now he passed among the cottages and huts as an angel on errands of mercy, and sinners told him of their sins, and mourners of their sorrows ; and he could here counsel and advise, and there comfort and cheer ; and here again, reprove and warn, and remove, by God's grace, hindrances from souls, and snares wherewith Satan would bind them. Mothers sought his wise, fatherly counsel for their erring sons ; those that had seemed hardened to his warning sent for him on the bed of sickness or of death, and bread cast upon the waters returned after all. And, he being the only one of the Brotherhood thus occupied, there was work for morning and noon, and almost for night ; and so the days went by.

But stronger things than man's mind and body will wear under continued strain and labour, without rest or calm ; and the Monk Ernestus felt the reaction of that stern purpose which had launched him, as a life-boat, into the toil and labour which, hitherto, had been as little realised or heeded by him as a storm at sea to a man seventy miles inland.

He had made no compromise between his inclination and his duty. When he locked that chest, with the vellum, and the colours, and the paintings in it, he had also locked therein his Art as well. Never had he since touched a brush, nor looked at a Missal, save for devotion. He had borne ridicule, disappointment, from his brethren, yea, even reproach and invective ; but he had never swerved ; at least, in *action* he had never faltered. I say not but, at times, a lingering look backwards would rise in his heart ; I say not that no repining, rebellious hours came, to be

grappled with by vigil and prayer. Life would sometimes seem hard and dry, and he rose weary in the morning to weary work in the day ; and each day was like the preceding, and the next would be like this ; and each brought labour, and none brought rest. For his times of ceasing from labour were times of constant religious exercise, and that, if a lull to the heart, was none to the brain.

So rigorous was he, indeed, that he would not permit himself, in passing through the wood or the lane, or by the stream, to notice and examine those scenes and details of loveliness, the "harvest of a quiet eye," which he had once so enjoyingly gleaned. The copse, for instance, of prim-roses in Spring, so full that some were spilled down the side of the bank ; above them, the early mist of green in the hedge ; and, higher, the larch, covered with little paint-brushes, full and thick with emerald-green. From these he turned away now, where he *had* mused by the hour. Nor the rustling, bead-eyed mice, in Summer, close to the trunk on which he sat ; nor the quick squirrel ; nor the rare beetle ; nor the lizard, the butterfly, the bird ; nor the chrysalis, swung like a hammock ; nor the caterpillar crossing the path,—none of these detained him now, far less lured paper and pencil from his robe. They would but have served to recall what had better be forgotten ; and life had other, nobler, ends than the heeding such trifles now.

So the Monk's life passed, and, for the first year, the mere impetus of that first push carried him on through all. Still, man is but man, and that unnatural strength began to flag, and that overwrought energy to fail. Spare diet, little sleep, no recreation ; a sort of depression supervened on these, that the Monk could not shake off. He thought it a carnal longing for the life he had renounced, and sought to meet and overcome it by more watching and fasting, and more incessant labour for the Lord. In vain, however ; the feeling was not spiritual, but simply *physical* ; the body was

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wearing out, had lost its tone and tune ; the nerves jarred painfully, merest trifles availed to shock them ; an uncontrollable irritability even at times, during the day, sent him, mourning, to pass the night on his knees.

And the change was patent in his look ; his high, smooth forehead began to set, almost invariably, in drawn and painful wrinkles ; his upright bearing became a stoop ; his pleasant smile a brooding gloom. Little children asked their mothers what made the Father so sad ? "*He has no little ones, my darlings,*" they answered, "*and no home.*" This was their simple and natural explanation ; they knew little of the struggle that was ageing, and indeed *killing*, their friend.

At the end of the second year, you would assuredly have passed the Monk Ernestus unrecognised, had you only known him in his days of Art and ease ; and the monks, beholding him, felt awed, and said to one another, "*Another year, and we shall chant beside his grave.*"

CHAPTER V.—HIS FULLER WISDOM.

" 'Our work,' said I, 'was well begun,
Then, from thy breast what thought,
Beneath so beautiful a sun,
So sad a sigh has brought ? ' "—TWO APRIL MORNINGS.

"The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won ;
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows, can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY.

THE June had again come round ; and, on its first evening, the Monk Ernestus had re-entered his cell, weary, faint, and discouraged, from a long day's work, entailing miles of

walking in the heat. Much in his work had dispirited and depressed him; more in himself had disappointed him to the heart's core. "I wearied not of my painting, for *that* I loved. Did I, indeed, love my Master, His work would be an ever-increasing joy; not, alas! only increasingly an effort and a trouble. Earthly nature, wilt thou never be subdued? Soul, wilt thou never burst thy trammels, and soar? '*Lovest thou Me?*' Ah, Master, did I indeed love Thee, it were not so hard to give this poor life to the pasturing Thy lambs, Thy sheep!"

He sat and mused, and the last red squares of sunlight grew redder on the bare and desolate wall, that, like that human heart, had laid aside its glad tints for a blank hue.

"So dull-hearted, so lazy, so selfish am I, that I long, with a coward longing, for the quiet and repose of death, and that just as life hath but begun to be lived. Oh for St. Paul's unresting spirit, that, through weariness and painfulness, held ever on, for the love of his dear Lord!"

The last squares of golden light were diminishing to bars, and the sun was ready to depart. The Monk looked up at the wall, not now with an instinct for the pictures, but with an instinct that had grown, since the old days, for that briar-thorn Cross, which he had so hung that those last sunbeams, type of life's ending, cast on it a glory. A look of surprise came into his face. The dry, withered stick had changed its appearance, and, twisted about its stem, smiled the crimson buds and warm blossoms of the sweet-briar flowers! That Cross had not disappeared; but, stranger yet, had it blossomed?

Those last ruddy bars of sunlight had dwindled, and passed away; and the warm twilight had paled and died out too, and the broad moon was looking into the turret cell again, when a remembered tap was heard at the door, and the Black Monk entered.

"This was then *thy* token, brother?" Ernestus pointed to the flowers upon the Cross.

"Yea, for I came to-day to thy cell, and, lo! thou wert absent. I came, and it saddened my heart to come, oh, my brother!"

"Yea, did it so still?" Ernestus said, sadly and humbly. "Blessed be thy surgery, faithful friend; cut yet deeper, aye, lower than the quick, even to the house of life, if thy Master bids thee. Cut out what thou yet findest carnal—too much there is—in this earthward heart!"

"I have heard much of thee, Brother Ernestus, and I came from mine own retirement to visit thee again; but I found thy cell changed, and methought I had mistaken my way. I gather that more there is than that which had reached me concerning thee and thy matters. What mean these bare walls, this absence of all trace of thy once-loved Art? And what meaneth this change that I see in thee—this stamp of premature age—this furrowed brow—this bent head and haggard look of illness? I marked thee walking through the wood this evening; thy step was feeble and slow, for its former alertness; thy form bent, for its old uprightness. Not, as once, didst thou pause, from time to time, as enjoying God's fair works, but didst pass ever on, mechanically and sadly, with looks still fixed on the ground."

"I own it, brother, I own it," said the Monk Ernestus. "Thou hast hit the mark; thou hast probed the wound. The cell, as thou seest, is bare, and the implements of idol-worship gone; but the carnal craving for ease and pleasure hath, I doubt not, its altar in the heart's heart still. Else why this sadness, which my look, my manner too plainly reveal? Were my Master's love the sole or the chief occupant of my heart, my Master's work would not be wearing this poor body to the grave. Thou justly reprovest me, my brother; but I am weak and foolish, and methinks I could weep as a child, where I should labour and endure as a

man. Yet have I striven against this feeling ; whole nights, brother, have I spent on my knees ; I have chastened my body with fasting ; I have walked, when I was weary unto death, long miles in the burning heat, that I might visit my Master in the person of one of His brethren. Alas, my carnal nature was still strong within me ! My sensual heart has whispered that life was hard, and dull, and dry ; and a coward craving for rest has insupportably weighed me down, having only just begun to labour. I have risen weary in the morning, and laboured weary through the day, and have lain down at night weary even to the death. And—bear with me, my brother, nor scorn me too much—I cannot choose but long earnestly for the Rest for which I have not laboured. I cannot resist an intense gladness and feeling of relief at the thought that I shall soon leave this work, which should be so dear, and lay me down there, where the weary are at rest. I feel urged to cry out, ‘ Oh, Master, be not angry with me. I thought to do double work for time mis-spent ; I thought to become, of Thy sole grace and goodness, a great champion for my Lord. But now I could be content to creep, the least and last of all, into the Outer Courts of Heaven, and obtain but *rest*, leaving rapture for Thy Saints.’ ”

The Stranger would have spoken, but Ernestus quickly prevented him.

“ Mistake me not,” he said, “ I *have* felt peace and joy in my Master’s work, but these seem more and more passing from me, instead of increasing. That old fire, and energy, and zeal, they seem dying out as straw-flames, and an ever-increasing deadness steals over the embers. But it will be over soon ; the depression and the heart-sinking, the disappointment and the self-scorn ; the slack *performance* of that my mind earnestly *intends*. I thought to walk, even on the boisterous waters, to my Lord. I am sinking, because my heart fails and is become faint—I shall sink, but I shall

not perish. . I cry—day and night I cry—‘Lord, save me !’ And He will. I shall hear a reproof ; I shall bow my head in shame ; yet will He catch me by the hand, even while He chides my little faith, and less love. Near the Presence mayest *thou* stand, oh, Strong and Unbending ! Yet wilt thou search for me in the Outer Courts, that I may then thank my reprover.”

The Black Monk could keep silence no longer. Not stern, nor unbending, was his look now. His eyes glistened full of tears, his firm voice shook, that he could scarce command his utterance. “Oh, good servant of the Lord,” he cried, “devoted, earnest, but mistaken ! thy Master hath yet work for thee to do for Him, and I am sent to stop thy squandering of His treasure. Was not thy *life* The Pound from thy Lord’s stores, placed in thine hands as His trust ? I reprov’d thee because thou didst let it lie idle, unimproved, untraded with. Shall I not reprove thee that thou tradest with it thus recklessly, prodigally, without thrift ? Is this to be a faithful steward of thy Lord’s money ? What ! when He cometh, shall there be but the increase of two years’ trading, when there should have been the goodly accumulation of perchance forty or fifty ? More gradually the store should grow, but in the end the pile should exceed far that which the furious energy of a few months could have gathered, yea, and its materials be withal better and more valuable.

“I spake heatedly, and perhaps over-earnestly before, stirred by all I saw in and around this Monastery ; and thou didst mistake my meaning. It pleaseth not God to see man miserable, though it pleaseth Him not to see him self-indulgent utterly, the less if he have specially vowed self-denial. Thou hadst not thought thy life one of self-indulgence ; and the reaction of the discovery has been too violent. Truth lies between the swing of the pendulum.

“Thou lookest incredulous. Hear me further. Can the bow that is never unbent send, in the end, as many and

as well-directed and sustained shafts as that which is at due times relaxed? Can the horse that is never rested do aught, in the end, in comparison with that duly fed and tended? And, having a spiritual nature, which is of chief account, we have, too, an animal nature, which God never made to be entirely neglected. Hath He not provided tenderly and carefully for its need? Pleasant sound for the ear, and every wood hath its choir; forms of beauty for the eye, from the daisy to the firmament; for the palate, for the smell, for the touch, He hath given just that which suits. And will it please Him that we disdain the banquet He hath spread?

"Thy distaste for work was no carnal sin, it was but physical weakness and overstrain. Take more food, more sleep, more recreation. Our self-denial there sins, at the least grievously errs, when, sapping our health, it renders us less able to serve God. And are morbid fancies and depressions, nervousness and irritability, aids in our serving Him?

"I said indeed that recreation should not be the *business* of life; but now I say that, for the continuance and healthy action of life, for the better performing of its great and solemn ends, *some* recreation is a *duty*."

Wonder had changed to thoughtfulness in the face of the Monk Ernestus, as he listened to such advice from his old reprover. Such thoughts in his own mind he had rebuked and resisted; but surely this stern Monitor deserved at least attention. And the plain, clear sense in his words almost brought conviction to a mind not yet, however, quite prepared to right itself, after so strong revulsion. At last he said, musingly, "What, then, wouldst thou have me to do?"

"In the first place, get thee to thy couch and rest thee till morn. Refuse not the gift of God to His beloved; for, saith the Psalmist, *sleep* is such a gift. I will lie here in my cloak; on the morrow we will talk further."

Almost mechanically Ernestus obeyed: and the wearied, child-hearted man slept with a tranquil slumber, feeling in

some manner—though having, as yet, not fixed his ideas into a resolve—as though a burden heavier than he could bear were about to be lifted from his shoulders. The sense of sinful yielding to what, indeed, had been but the demands of nature, but which his distorted imagination had held to be the craving of carnal indulgence, seemed to be leaving him, though he felt almost a pang and a fear lest all was not well, as the change crept gradually over his thought.

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The Dark Monk yet lingered in the cell, though the hour of noon had passed. The Monk Ernestus, always gentle-hearted and easily guided, seemed docile and reliant as a child in the presence of one whose admonition had so changed his life and so convulsed his whole nature. The truth had indeed commended itself now to his mind—recommended by a guide who, he knew, would not mislead him ; and as this guide reasoned and Ernestus listened, the whole bearing of the matter orbled clear and perfect into his apprehension. Hitherto alternate half-moons had given him imperfect light, but now the moon was full.

Yet from one persuasion of his adviser he still shrank. He could not make up his mind to return to that Art which had once been his delight. Dead, his love for it had long seemed. It did but, however, sleep under a frosty ground, ready to come up as the snowdrop, if a spring air should call. But so long had he striven against the very thought of it as sinful, that he almost shuddered at the idea of ever disinterring his buried delight.

The Stranger took the key from his reluctant hand ; one by one he replaced the paintings on the walls ; he drew out the colours—those old loved tints—and ranged them on the bench ; the cunning brushes he laid beside them ; last, he fitted the easel, and drew out that gorgeous Gospel of St. Matthew, and opened the page to the glad Lark singing above the nest. He beckoned to Ernestus.

"Nay," he said, sadly, "never again. Thy ban is upon these things, and thy word of reproof would tarnish the gold and dim the colours while I painted."

"Let it be thy *recreation*, not thy *work*, brother Ernestus. Thy work shall then be better done, and even thy recreation be, in its sense, a serving of God."

But Ernestus turned sadly away. "Thou dost but concede to my weakness. *Thou* wouldst not thus bestow thy leisure."

The Dark Monk replied not. He drew a stool to the desk, carefully selected a brush, examined the colours, and drew the unfinished work towards him. Ernestus stood by, wondering. But the fellow wing of the soaring lark came first, exquisitely perfect in hue and feather, on the page. And on the other side of the Text there grew, under the master's hand, a new design. A robin sat beside his nest upon a bent spray of silver cherry-blossom, against an azure sky, and, though not soaring like the lark, he yet looked upward and sang with heavenward regard.

"In thy soarings thou mayst worship and serve, as the lark, that forsakes all of earth for his orisons. But in thy repose and resting times, while rejoicing to find earth fair, thou mayst yet look stedfastly heavenward, as the robin."

The stranger smiled to see the wonder of the Monk Ernestus.

"Hast thou heard," he said, "of the calligrapher Theodulus? That rich Missal lying on thy table at my first visit was the work of these hands. I came at the first to visit a brother in Art, as well as a brother in heavenly love and labour. But finding the people uncared for, and the Monastery self-indulgent, I spake as I did, without discovering myself. I meant not my words to be taken as thou understoodest them. Now, my brother, fear not to do as I; *some* days, indeed, abstaining wholly, yet *ordinarily* I allot a time for rest and relaxation, when the time for

labour, for prayer, and for meditation has been cared for and satisfied. I sit not down unless I feel the relaxation earned ; but then my quiet hour refreshes mind and body for new work when it cometh round. So my work is better done, and, two ways, God is served."

Not for some weeks after these things did Ernestus leave his cell. Body and brain had been overtasked, and had given way. His illness was long, and his weakness so great, that Theodulus, his constant attendant, often thought at times that work and recreation alike were over for that worn mind and wasted form. But he rose, and went out to his ministry again, blessed of the people, a new and fresh man. Again we might behold him, after the work of the day was done, sitting with his bright and gorgeous illuminating in his little turret cell. Again would he pass into the wood, ere the sun's final sinking, to meditate on God's Word, with the commentary of God's works.

And his eye grew kindly and bright again, and his heart expansive, human, and warm. A sadness and a fear still checked him at times, lest he should let the lighter part of his service encroach on the more solemn and sacred duties. But there was a safeguard which he laid to heart, and illumined with an according practice, as with a goodly border—even that ancient and Divine precept, "~~Watch~~ and Pray."

And thus guarded, he had no need to fear, but preserved still the safe, wise mean ; perceiving and avoiding, in a life of cheerful diligent labour,

"The Falsehood of Extremes."



WEDDING BELLS.

(January 25th, 1858.)

NEWS of thy marriage, o'er the land,
Young Princess, loudly swells,
And, from their slumber in the Tower,
—As smitten by a fairy wand—
Wake up the banded Bells.

As snowflakes pausing ere they fall,
The bell-notes float around,
Circling about, confused yet clear,
—A deep vibration swims through all,
Scenting the air with sound.

The village spires far-voiced proclaim
Sweet prayers of peace for thee,
The College Tower's deep-cadenced ten
In long-linked racings thrill the air,
And fire in bursts, and sink again
To strange low prayings for thy name,—
And far and near peals everywhere
The wild bell-minstrelsy.

Their murmurous, many-voiced hum
Over the Island dwells ;
—Some sorrow to thy heart must come
To hear the "Farewell" of thy home,
From all its hills and dells
In solemn measures sung to thee
In rhythm sweet of bells.

Yet go, God's blessing on thee, Child,
So may the life He gave
Be blessed, that when thy parting knells
Are wafted o'er the wave
They may but seem,—to hearts that heard
How that old peal thine England stirred,—
As lingerers from thy Marriage bells
That come to bless thy grave.

"ONLY A LITTLE ONE."

In Memoriam, C. D. V.

"ONLY A LITTLE ONE."

In Memoriam, C. D. V.

I.—WOUNDED.

"CARRY me out of the host," *
For the archer's shaft has found
In a mother's bosom, the mark above all
For the bitter and barbèd wound ;
Wounded, but not to the death,
Yet ah ! in the tenderest spot,
By the last little flutter of innocent breath
That told me, my darling was not.

"Carry me out of the host,"
For oh, my heart is sore !
And indeed in the rough, grim battle of life
For awhile I can fight no more ;
For harder the conflict grows
As the forces of youth decline,
And the spirit † of man sustains him at first,
But a broken spirit is mine.

"Carry me out of the host,"
For the random arrows fly,
They find where the joints of the harness are
That escape our anxious eye ;
At a venture is drawn the bow,
And the life-blood is easily lost,
And tears must have time to flow—
"Carry me out of the host !"

* 1 Kings xxii. 34.

† Prov. xviii. 14.

“Carry me out of the host,”
For awhile I would turn aside,
As flutters a bird with a broken wing
To some secret place to hide ;
—What hand can my hurt allay ?
What ointment its throbbing calm ?
Is there *no* physician ?—say !
Nor in Gilead any balm ?

—But her cry reached the ear of the King,
And melted His pitiful breast ;
“Carry her out of the host !
She is weary, and hurt, and must rest ;”
And a Hand that was wounded points,
And a heart that was broken throbs,
And His “Peace ! be still !” assuages the wind,
And hushes the wave, of her sobs.

So they carry her out of the host,
To a place which seems desert awhile ;
Yet where bitter is sweetness almost,
And the tear is akin to the smile.
And a Hand is laid on her wound,
And the throbbing and anguish grow calm :
—And behold, a Physician is found :
And in Gilead, healing balm.

“Carry her out of the host !”
Let the sounds of fight die far,
She will rest and be quiet awhile,
And come back, refreshed, to the war ;
Then, though the arrows fly fast,
Their flight she shall know and approve ;
Though the bow at a venture be drawn,
Yet the arrow is guided by Love.

II.—ASLEEP.

FOLD her hands upon her breast,
Mother dear ;
There ! she sweetly seems to rest,
Mother dear ;
Little hands that wanted all
Ask for nought ;
Empty now. Nay, some flowers
May be brought ;



For the hands will harm them not,
Never fear.

There's a tear upon her brow,
Mother dear ;
But it cannot wake her now,
Mother dear ;
Quiet, quiet, days and years,
She will keep,
Making up the long arrears
Of her sleep,
Never heeding though you weep
Sadly here.

'Tis a fair sight, is it not,
Mother dear ?
One not easily forgot,
Mother dear ?
Little waxen hands we mark,
Left and right ;
Lashes stirring not, and dark
On the white ;
But the eyes have veiled their light
Gray and clear.

Ah, her spirit soared on high,
Mother dear ;
—Singing, singing—to the sky,
Mother dear ;
She became a “sightless song,”
In the blue.
Did we seem to suffer wrong ?
—Nay, we knew
To the summer lands she flew
Far from here !

Does she wonder why you weep,
Mother dear?
"Gazing purely down the steep,"
Mother dear;
Where in Paradise her Lord,
Meek and mild,
In the midst, as erst, has placed
A young child:
Ever to the Throne, undefiled,
To be near.

.

Will she join the white-robed band,
Mother dear,
As beside her grave we stand,
Mother dear?
Will she stroke you, as you cry,
Feeling then
Comfort, though you know not why,
For you ken,
By the mother's instinct, when
She is near?

Flying, ere she knew to walk,
Mother dear;
Singing, ere she knew to talk,
Mother dear;
Not a quiver in her voice,
As in ours;
Singing, as the birds rejoice,
And the flowers,
That look up, and smile at the showers,
Falling here.

.

Tears shall seem jewels where she lies
 Mother dear ;
Soft winds shall be her only sighs,
 Mother dear ;
None but the south and the west *
 Find her grave ;
Sunbeams lie there ; shadow's rest
 She shall have ;
She shall sleep in the hearing of the wave,
 Hushing her.

—Come with me ; come away,
 Mother dear ;
What ! a moment you must stay,
 Mother dear ?
Must another diamond gleam
 Where she lies,
That her “parure” may beseem
 Paradise ?
Come away. Let it rest.
 Dry your eyes.
Leave your Pearl upon God's breast,
 Mother dear.

* On the south side of the church ; under the slope of the Quantock Hills ; near the sea.

III.—NEXT DAY.

BACK to the old routine,
With hearts that are fain to be brave :
Back to the old routine,
Leaving the flowers on her grave.
Pretty flowers ! They "pull sideways" now,
But the turf it will soon be green :
And the hours, they come and go—
Back to the old routine !

Back to the old routine ;
There is homely work to be done,
Common-place duties, and offices mean,
But yet that we may not shun.
Take the lesson-books down from the shelf,
Awake the piano from sleep :
Who amongst us may live to himself,
And dare to do nothing but weep ?

Back to the old routine ;
Let the light flood the rooms as before ;
Fold the small robes and put them away,
A sacred and sorrowful store ;
And the toys that the little hands clasped,
That never shall clasp them again ;
And the cradle and basket so daintily dressed,
With a care that was lavished in vain.

Back to the old routine ;
Ah, not David the king could be spared,
Though he cried out for Absalom dead
As loud and as long as he dared ;

" *The people expect thee without ;
They require that their King should be seen ;*"
—It is early to stifle the moan,
But—back to the old routine !

Yes, back to the old routine ;
Life's caravan still windeth on,
And the others will never stand still
For one that has dropt out and gone.
"Take thy place. Do thy work. That is now,
Is more pressing than that which has been ;"
Ah ! 'tis best ! It is merciful, too ;
So, then, back to the old routine !

Back to the old routine ;
Yet our Snowdrop we shall not forget ;
And, at intervals, pausing between,
The eyes of our heart will be wet.
"*Good-morning !*" we say by thy grave ;
And still, at the waning of light.
We whisper thy name "with the lave,"
And gather thee still in "*Good-night.*"

Back to the old routine,
But this and that trifle will bring
The little maid yet to our mind,
As dried scents will waft to us Spring ;
A thought, that is almost a sob,
Pay its tribute to that which has been ;
—Ah, thou smilest, secure of their love,
Who are—back to the old routine !

IV.—THE OFFERING.

On being asked the question, "Will there be babes in Paradise?"

A SNOWDROP I gave to my Lord,
 And He carefully laid it to sleep,
 In His garden-ground, through the winter months ;
 With a Cross the place to keep.
 It was my darling of flowers,
 But He asked it, I gave it to Him,
 Yes, willingly gave, for His Eden-bowers,
 Yet with eyes that were tearful and dim.

But one day I fell asleep,
 And awoke in His garden glad ;
 And "Come !" He said, "and see how I keep
 That treasure of thine that I had."
 —So I followed through Eden's bowers,
 But I could not their loveliness mind,
 And I passed by the stateliest flowers,
 Mine own little Snowdrop to find.

Still before me the Gardener went ;
 Then He paused and my heart gave a leap ;
 "Look," He said, "on these Roses superb !"
 —Ah, can mothers in Paradise weep ?
 I wanted, so badly I did,
 Mine own little Snowdrop to kiss ;
 What comfort to me if He said
 It was grandly transformed into this ?

Then He smiled with such love, that no other
 Could have thought of aught else but His smile ;
 But what would you ? Ah, none but a mother
 Could tell how I felt all the while !

No one else? Nay, I saw in His face
That He knew why my countenance fell;
His, passeth the love of a woman,
And He knows all about it quite well.

“Not satisfied, Sister?” He said;
Are not Roses than snowdrops more fair?”
But His kind eyes grew dim as he spake,
And He led me on farther: “See there!”
And I started, and forward I sprang;
—’Twas my bud without sully or stain;
And He placed in my arms, but oh, sweet beyond words,
Mine own little Snowdrop again.

V.—THE WREN.

(A FACT.)

No one but you and I, Dear,
Can tell how we love the Wren;
The little brown birdie that came to us,
And was always with us when—
“When!”—Ah! the word has a sadness,
For we know how it must go on;
—“When our little maiden was with us;
Our Dorothy.” But she has gone.

She has gone, but while she was with us,
The little Wren stayed too;
And it seemed quite sure of its welcome,
Howe’er it might come and go:
In at the window, sometimes,
And trilling its anthem glad;
Especially if it so happened
That we were heavy and sad.

So the two were joined in our fancy,
The dear little maid and the Wren,
And they seemed to us sent, as God's Angels
That minister comfort to men :



They came, as come to us the Angels,
—And as Angels their wings they spread,
—For, the morn that our little maid left us,
In the garden the Wren lay—dead.

And we missed her, O but we missed her !
Our sweet little “ Gift of God,”

When nothing was left to our yearning
But the rounded green grass sod ;
And we missed, too, our brown little birdie,
For we somehow had linked them in one,
And 'twas strange that the Wren should have left us,
Directly the sweet maid had gone.

But this morn while I dressed, at my window
A flutter and beating was heard,
And I cried out, forgetting, " Ah, this is,
No doubt, our own brown little bird ! "
And I looked. Lo, a Wren it was truly,
But, you scarce will believe it when told,
On the little head shone out resplendent
A Coronet, gleaming, of gold !

Then I thought how we linked in our fancy
The sweet little maid and the Wren,
And I knew God had sent to us tidings,
Without either paper or pen ;
For He seemed, who commandeth His angels,
This messenger small to have found,
Just to tell us—" *She does not forget you,
Although she is happy, and crowned.*"



SWEET SEVENTEEN. (M. A. V.)

TWO VOICES.

O SWEET Seventeen, the world for you
Its sweetest sweets discloses ;
The Spring-flowers are, that yet you know,
But earnest of its roses ;
Come, dedicate to it, hope, trust,
The heart's fresh love and gladness,
And win—

An Angel answered low,
“Heart-weariness and sadness.

“Nay, child of God,” the Angel said,
“Turn from the world's false seeming ;
—Such an awakening, drear and sad,
Results upon the dreaming !
But wouldst thou win true joy of heart,
In early life and later,
—In youth's bright days, ere evil comes,
Remember thy Creator !

“Before the evil days have come,
And years that have no pleasure,
And famine-cravings gnaw the heart
That gave the world its treasure ;
While yet the sun above is bright,
And stars are splendid o'er thee,
And hopes, and visions of delight,
Make glad the way before thee.

“Then dedicate to Him thy love,
Thy hope, thy trust, thy gladness,
Life’s sun shall shine, with softened glow
Of calm that is not sadness :
God’s Bow of comfort, in the clouds
Be set, that come to prove thee ;
At eventide, there shall be light,
Clear stars of God, above thee !”

.

The Angel paused ; for One drew near, and spoke
In tones that ravished all the soul, to hear,
“Come unto Me, my child, give Me thine heart ;
For lo,” (the words as a sweet echo came :)
“Beholding thee, I love thee !”



WOOD-VIOLET AND MIGNONETTE :

OR,

His Very Wife.

WOOD-VIOLET AND MIGNONETTE:

OR,

His Very Wife.

CHAPTER I.

HER eyes were the clear hazel-brown so often compared to those of a Newfoundland dog; that was why they called her "Dog-Violet." Her home was a lovely nest, all surrounded, save on one side, with woods; that was why they called her "Wood-Violet."

For her name, in the first instance, was "Violet"—a name to play with; only they could not make her, anyhow, "Double-Violet," so simple was her nature; nor could she be aptly termed "White-Violet," so rich was she in colour, so rosy were her cheeks, so ruddy-gold her hair.

She was everybody's darling. So innocently, demurely merry and gay; with such sweet, surprised eyes, and curved lashes, and eyebrows arched, as though in perpetual wonder at the petting and the love which somehow everybody conspired to give her, yet which, unlike some queens of love, she never could take as though her due, only under a pretty, grateful protest at the kindness of everyone to "little me." A soft and merry kitten when a child; so fat, yet so firm to kiss; so fair, yet never freckling or seeming to be caught by the sun, of which, as she danced under the protecting boughs of the leafy nut-walk, she seemed an incarnate beam. Oh, yes, *then* everybody loved to pet her, and to bury a kiss in the fat white neck—white as a cream-cheese, yet pinking faintly about the dainty lines which creased it here and

there. And she was the joy of brother and sister, and the delight, be sure, of the Father, and the darling of Mother and Nurse. And all these might, could, would, and *did* pet her still, now that she was a grown maiden, to the much aggravation of some others who would have greatly *liked* to share in the privilege, but had no acknowledged claim so to do.

She was, however, at the time of the opening of our acquaintance with her, engaged. Sweet seventeen—just developing into eighteen ; as when a rosebud opens a petal or two about its heart. Sweet seventeen, and yet engaged.

Her face was her fortune. Excepting fifty pounds a year, which an uncle had left her, she had not a penny in the world. What matter ? “It would always be enough to dress her, without her having to come to her *Husband*,” she said, “and to do for presents ;” and she might have added, for many a little act of secret charity ; for the poor people also loved Miss Violet dearly, not, however, for her kindly little helps in need, nearly so much as for “her sweet, sunny face, God bless her ! and for her loving words when a body’s down ; and for her blessed little ways, and for her pretty self.”

Yes, her face was her fortune ; for I come now to the sad admission—which I have been delaying as long as I could—Miss Violet was not a bit clever. Only her pretty self, and her many dear little ways, and her joyousness of heart, and her large love and trust—that was all she had : and fifty pounds a year besides. Fifty pounds ; all her own, and “*not yours*,” she would say, merrily holding her grave lover’s face between her plump white hands and pink taper fingers, “*not yours to touch, Sir, at all !*”

And, in a very sober, serious fashion, she used to say to her cousin Mignonette, “You know, he *must* really love *me*, just little me ; for I haven’t any money, and I’m not at all clever, like *you*, Minnie. I haven’t got any *mind*, you know ; I’m just a silly little thing, and yet everybody’s so good to

me. I don't know *why* it is ; but it is very good of them, and it makes me very happy."

It was quite true. Her face, and her pretty ways, and her loving heart made up all she had to give to her grave, intellectual lover, who had somehow been surprised, *malgré lui*, into falling in love, but, once fallen in, found the situation too charming ever to wish to creep out again. She was not—never would be—a woman with mind. She played and sang prettily and joyously ; and would bring the tears to her own eyes and to yours with the pathos of some simple Ballad. But she "didn't care" for those "dry Sonatas and things of Beethoven's ;" and "why couldn't Mendelssohn have put words to his 'Lieder'—well, Songs without words?" she was "sure they would have been more interesting, although they would *anyhow* be rather dry." Bach's "Fugues"? Oh ! She shrugged her pretty shoulders, and made, indeed she did, a little grimace, when Mr. Margrave asked (as only *at first* he did) whether she ever played them. She was a little blithe willow-wren—he satisfied his heart by saying—only made to trill out a song that was half a laugh ; or a light feather, she was ; a bark, not knowing of ballast, scudding gay and safe over the depths and shallows of life—gay and safe, unless some unkind cataract should drench it ; and to avert *that* would be the care of his life, Mr. Margrave thought.

Then languages ? No, she *never* could learn them : she could turn a little French to music on her lips ; and a smattering of soft Italian found itself at home there, but not the guttural German. A kind lady friend had once given her some readings in "that dreadful Dante ;" but how gladly she had hailed a break in these readings, which proved at last a cessation from them !

"For, you know, Minnie, I really don't care for *any* reading except just the *Queen*, and Mrs. Gaskell's stories, and such things. I never was clever, and never shall be.

And it was really dreadful to think of the *quantity* that Dante *meant* in everything he wrote."

Eustace Margrave had sounded her as to her taste for poetry. "I don't *mind* some of Longfellow: 'The Bridge,' and 'Pulaski's Banner,' and 'Excelsior;,' only I *can't* think why he would go out so high on that uncomfortable night, and when *everybody* warned him of the danger. I never could understand what he really wanted to *do*; but then I daresay it's because I'm stupid."

But Eustace (as David with Dora, only Violet was not such a—well, little silly—as poor little Blossom; she had a good under-current of fair common-sense): Eustace had an idea that he might *educate* the child (he himself was twenty-eight years old). So he used to read to her Tennyson, and Browning, and Matthew Arnold, until he found it was of no use. "The May Queen," to be sure, she liked; but "Locksley Hall" quite went beyond her. Why he should want to marry a "savage woman" she could not understand; and a great deal of what he said about women she thought very rude. Then, what "Andrea del Sarto" had done to King Francis, and why *his* being married properly prevented his painting as well as Raphael, who wasn't, she could not make out. "The Arab Physician," and "Pippa Passes," also "In Memoriam" and *The Idylls*, quite mystified her; and I think the finishing touch was given by her asking (after Eustace had read "Guinevere" with all the pathos of which he was a great master), "What was all the fuss about?" and, seeing his look of horror, murmuring, "I think it's very *pretty* indeed." He burst out laughing then, and threw the book on one side, and gave himself up thenceforward to simply basking. "It's of no use, child mine, to try to make a poetess of you, I see that!" And she (with a sly side-look, to see if any vexation underlay the exclamation): "No, dearie, I don't think it is; but, you see, I never was clever, and never did care for books, really!"

But, for her, she was unusually grave a whole three-quarters of an hour after this failure.

Now, I was fond of this pretty child ; and I do not want the frankness of this my confidence to you to make you think of her with any feeling but that of reverent love. She was not a woman with a mind ; a *woman* ? nay, she was not a woman at all. A child-woman, then, let me call her ; not clever, but only with a heart ; a child's trust ; a child's full, tender heart ; but with a woman's sense, for all that. Not clever, no ; not at all intellectual, but no fool ; quite a sage little body, in fact—in management, in neatness, and order. Eyes easily brimming ; yet, at a pinch, none of your useless spasmodics ; no, full of sense, of self-resource, of white-cheeked courage. Little Violet : she was a darling, that is what she was ; and I doubt whether Eustace Margrave really understood and appreciated the depths of the character of the child-wife that he indulgently and almost compassionately loved and petted. She was not intellectual, that he knew ; still he felt himself fascinated, and he knew not how or why. The sweetness, the beauty, the simplicity and sincerity of the child—her winning ways, her serviceableness ; her trust in him, her loving heart, her humility and self-depreciation—these made up a charming whole that you could not analyse ; and the man of learning—aye, the man of genius (for he was this), the student and the poet—asked himself sometimes, wonderingly, how it could be that he loved her. And he found no adequate answer ; only the fact remained that life became a different thing for him when this little embodied Poem dawned upon his studies and upon his dreams.

It was a pretty sight to see the sweet child and the grave man together in their lover days ; she so dainty and charming, and wondering all the while that she should have power to charm ; he so fascinated, and wondering all the while what the spell could be that made him take such delight

in one so different from that which his ideal had been of the intellectual partner one day to be his, appreciative, sympathetic—

“The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill :
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command ;
And yet a spirit still, and bright,
With something of angelic light.”

Did he sometimes ask himself whether he had done wisely ; whether the glamour would last ; whether the little witch’s spell would by any possibility lose its power in the dull routine of married days ?

I know not. It is possible that some such “vague, faint auguries” may have come to him at times : doubts, dim as ghosts, hazily suggested rather than really apprehended. But such pale, misty shades never could define themselves into tangible form, nor, indeed, abide for five minutes the warmth and the light of her delicious presence.

They used to go for walks together in the quiet woods, and through the meadows of tender pasture, or deep with flowers and flowering grass ripening for hay. Brightly appreciative here was she ; soberly appreciative was he. Each in their own way loved the loveliness of God’s world—he intellectually ; she impulsively and by instinct : he with the higher, more fastidious enjoyment of the mind ; she with the more generous and general delight of the heart. Yet here they were well paired, as it happened. For just as Sir Joshua Reynolds advises the practised artist to listen to the child’s criticism, because of its freshness of eye—nor only for this, but also because of its freshness of soul, undrilled yet into any art-groove—so Eustace Margrave perceived, with a poet’s intuition, and enjoyed, with an artist’s appreciation, the natural remarks, the unsophisticated delight, the native and *naïve* appreciation with which his child-love

would comment upon the minutiae and the grandeur of the scenery about them. From the mushroom to the mountain, her notice of all and delight in all were unbounded. And it was this very simplicity and naturalness of the remarks that charmed him so. The standpoint from which she regarded nature was so entirely different from his own. He, as it were, sought and naturally found an analogy, a parable, a simile, in the rush or the loitering of the stream; in the coming or the downward flutter of the leaf and the blossom; in the flaunt of the butterfly; in the glow of the sunset; in the trail of the falling star. She appreciated, and keenly appreciated, those things just for themselves and for their own beauty, seeking not in everything a *meaning*—as it were, admiring the brown nuts as they fell, not perpetually cracking them in search of some inward kernel. His admiration and appreciation were, in a sense, artificial; hers wholly natural. He enjoyed, it may be, more refinedly; she more universally. And his grave man's thought found in the freshness of her pure child-delight a charm that was new to it entirely. For even in boyhood he had been thoughtful, meditative, almost moody. It was the bird of wisdom and the gay, laughing willow-wren unequally yet compensatingly mated. But would the union endure?

It was evident, from an incident in one of these walks, that the quick woman's apprehension which underlay the child's heart had happened upon this question, and been, as gravely as the gay spirit could contrive, considering this problem. How was the thought started in the simple mind? I always fancy it must have been suggested by the acquiesced-in failure of the Tennyson and Browning readings. However this may be, these were the circumstances, long after remembered, of that April walk.

They had been roaming through a wood, delighting in the new green of the nut and beech, and noting the lichen-beard which had grown about the tree-trunks, that were

wreathing a garland of honeysuckle round their heads in preparation for coming May-day. Here and there, as they trod over crisp bracken and over beds of leaves whose softness muffled their steps, they came upon an open spot, with a shy primrose or two—a great delight to see in the wood—and an early group of dusking bluebells, or a spike of purpling orchis. They rambled on like two children: he the grave elder brother; she the gleeful child-sister, springing from his side after this and that treasure, gathering last year's acorn-cups, empty snail-shells, vacant hazel-nuts—what not, to be stored in his pockets; ecstatic at the dart of a rustling rabbit with his white tail bobbing through the dry fern; in rapture at the gambols in the branches over them of a squirrel that the warm day had awakened; merry as Wordsworth's kitten with the falling leaves. They had heard the chiff-chaff, the little laughing willow-wren, the blackcap even (a late comer), the cuckoo's messenger. Violet liked to learn the names and songs of the birds. And now, just as they reached the exit from the wood, behold, the cuckoo's note of Spring.

So they sat upon a felled trunk at the portal of the copse to rest, to look at the picture extended before them, and to enjoy the herald announcement of the advent of the Spring.

A picture indeed was unrolled before them. The Copse through which they had passed sloped down to a little valley, through which, here whispering and there dreaming, a thread-brook trickled. Later in the season tall yellow flags, and willow-herbs with crimson flowers, tracked its frets and curves; cool cresses made islets here and there where it widened. Presently a water-ouzel came and dipped, on a stone near them; and a water-rat slid up the bank and cleaned its whiskered face, glancing from side to side with black bead-eyes. For they sat, after the first exclamation, silent for some little while.

But on the other side of the streamlet the ground sloped



upwards again, and here also ash and hazel and chestnut continued the plantation ; but here the woodman had come in the Winter, and had left, when his work was done, a bare and ruined plot—a desolate array of clean-cut stumps or “stools” where the waving wood had been. And Violet had pouted and scolded at the havoc, and told woodman Thomas that she had a great mind never to speak to him again. And anon the kind snow had in pity laid its concealing mantle over the ruin.

But now Winter had been relieved on his guard, and young sweet Spring had come, gleeful but tender-hearted, and had cast over all the desolation her lovely scarf of foliage and flowers. Not only were the young shoots, tender and green, everywhere crowding up to hide the scars of their parents, but breadths of primroses made the hill-side glorious ; and while the dusking bluebells were preparing *their* contingent, only less abundant than the primroses, masses of the wood-violet glorified the whole hill-side with its pale, kind, lovely azure.

Which shall we love most dearly, the delicate hues of the dress of the child-year, or the rich and splendid garb of the year in its womanhood ? Spring or Autumn, which shall have the palm ? Different hearts will answer differently—or the same differently at different times.

Be that as it may, this was a sweet Spring picture—one well worth, even to lovers, a few moments of silent contemplation.

But it was not the way with our heroine to be silent or still for long. Soon, like a butterfly, she was hovering among the flowers, clapping her hands in glee ; at last honouring her pale blue namesake by her selection, and lightly springing over the brook, she seated herself again, with her bouquet, by Margrave’s side.

“ See,” she cried, “ are they not lovely ? ”

“ Very lovely,” he answered. “ It is a pity that +

have no scent. But, after all, the Giver of gifts gives His gifts compensatingly. The jay, with fair feathers and harsh note; the nightingale (I almost thought we might have heard one to-day), the little brown nightingale, dull in plumage and ravishing in song. And here, again, the Mignonette, plain and homely in appearance, and of exquisite scent; the Wood-violet, so fair, but scentless."

This was the way he loved to moralise, and the child liked to hear his grave, thoughtful musings, if she did not always understand them. But now a strange look came over her face, as a shadow from some cloud glides sometimes over the sunny tossing of a field of the merry silken barley, that is for ever in a gleeful motion while it is only yet in blossom. Even so a graveness quieted the dimples on little Violet's happy face, and made the dead-gold lashes droop, and seemed to dwell on the light of her golden hair. And they were silent again. And she, like Enid,

"plucked the grass
There growing longest by the water's edge,
And into many a listless annulet
Wove and unwove it."

What was the little heart busy about? Margrave wondered too, after a while.

"What, deep in thought, little scatter-brain?" he playfully said. "What an event in your life! Come, you must tell me the result of a process so unique."

It may be that the very question chimed in with, if it were so, that which was the passing suggestion of an anxiety in her heart. At any rate she looked quickly at him, and moved her lips to speak, and then only cuddled his arm and laid her face suddenly down upon it. Such a treat of colour on the dark ground—who could resist, if the penalty had been death, kissing it as it rested there?

This done, he gaily resumed his questioning:—

"Well, prettiest of all the wood-violets, what profound problem are we engaged in working out?"

Again she glanced quickly at him; but the face was only tender and loving. No double meaning there; no mischief even. Still, she had let the words slip out:—

"Ah, that's just it."

He still looked at her with amused face—the grave man with his child-love. But her hand had crept up about his neck now, and her cheek lay on his shoulder.

"I'm only a silly little thing," she whispered. "I never was clever at all, like—like some women. Everybody is kind to me, and you have got very fond of me, I know. But—but don't you sometimes feel a little disappointed? Aren't you afraid sometimes that you'll get tired some day, especially when I get older, you know, and plainer than—I am now? Don't you sometimes wish that your little wife was going to be a woman with—with a mind?"

"Why, little one," he began, still with amusement, but also with wonder in his face, "what *can* have——"

But she laid her taper finger beseechingly on his lip, and went on:

"I listen, dear, when you are talking to my cousins. They are so clever, you know, and can understand all your poets and grand thoughts; and I like you to like them; and I have often laughed to think how clever they are and what a shallow little head poor mine is. And you tried to make me understand things, and it was all of no use! And you were reading the other night about that grand painter—Andrea del Something—and his pretty, stupid wife. And there was a line in it about some women bringing a mind. And Mignonette said a good deal about that, and about incompatibility in married life. Not *at* me—oh no, I know that; for she loves me very dearly—everyone does, they are so kind. Still, I can't understand those grand things—never could. I'm only a silly bright little Violet, you know."

"Well, dear child, and what else?" said Margrave, thinking it better to let her have her say out.

"Why, you see, I thought you looked a little grieved when you gave up trying to read to me; and some things they said that evening, not thinking a bit of me, made me think. And then to-day, wasn't it funny you should talk of mignonette and wood-violet: and one, you know, was bright and gay; and one was not so bright to look at. But one had only just her looks, which wouldn't last long; and the other, you see, had a mind—I mean, had exquisite scent. Ah, Eustace, don't you think, *really*, that the mignonette is the best?"

She looked up now, with a simple child's anxiety for the answer: and her lover noticed, with infinite commiseration and love, that a bead-tear trembled on the dead-gold of each long lash. He framed her lovely face in his hands, and kissed the tears away.

"Silly, *silly* child! Don't you think I am old enough to know my own mind? Not like with like, but contrast matches with contrast. My pretty Violet, she is clever enough—or, rather, *foolish* enough—to love a disagreeable old fellow like me. See, I've picked my violet, I mean to wear her; bright and lovely, and with a warm, warm heart; indeed, a little 'Heartsease.'"

"Yes," she said, earnestly peering into a flower, "there *is* an orange heart in the blue; and it *is* a little like heartsease! Do you know I never noticed that till now."

And the glee lit up her great wide eyes again, and the cloud passed from the sunshine of her face.

"Do you think I can be a little like heartsease to you? And you're *sure* you won't get tired of your poor violet; nor wish it was more like mignonette? *Quite* sure?" framing his face in turn.

And on the way home, after a compassionate study of her drooping bunch:

"*Quite* sure? Not even when it begins to fade?"

CHAPTER II.

WEDDING-BELLS! No wonder there is to outsiders and to bystanders such a pathos in their delight, such a pleading in their exultation, such plaintiveness in their joy. I do not think this is accounted for by Hood's chilling thought, that the Funeral Toll strikes every octave in the Marriage peal:—

“Aye, Beauty the Girl, and Love the Boy,
Bright as they are with hope and joy,
How their souls would sadden instanter,
To remember that one of those wedding-bells,
Which ring so merrily through the dells,
Is the same that knells
Our last farewells,
Only broken into a canter!”

No, for I believe that, in fact, the chill advent of the thought would but call up triple warmth to the heart of Love, the boy, and Beauty, the girl, and the pressure of the hand and the murmur of the lips would defy dull Death's utmost to end their love.

“Doubts of eternity ne'er cross
The Lover's faith, divinely clear;
For ever is the gain or loss
Which maddens him with hope or fear.”

No, no; Love laughs at Death, Death that does but give it wings to fly away from the realm of Change. The sobbing that runs through the laughter of wedding-bells comes, to my thinking, far more from the fact that they have rung at so many weddings over whose blossom-promise such blights have gradually stolen.

“The lover who, across a gulf
Of ceremony, views his love
And dares not yet address herself,
Pays worship to her stolen glove.
The gulf o'erleapt, the lover wed,
It happens oft (let truth be told)

The halo leaves the sacred head,
Respect grows lax, and worship cold,
And all love's May-day promising,
Like song of birds before they pair,
Or flush of flowers in boastful Spring,
Dies out, and leaves the Summer bare."

And this the Bells, be sure, know ; and, because of this, their merriest triumph and exultation seem, to thoughtful hearts that listen, ever and anon to die off into a wail.

It is not, therefore, surprising that I seemed to hear this melancholy refrain pervading the gaiety of the marriage bells, or answering it with the subdued echo of a muffled peal, when I was a witness and a listener on the day that my pretty little favourite gave her "hand, and her heart with it," to Eustace Margrave. "Vague, faint auguries of despair," whispered in their blithest music ; and yet why, I could not have said, except for the reasons given above, and for the habit I have of moralising, someway like to the melancholy Jaques.

For a joyous day it was ; just such a day, in the very next Spring, as that on which we watched the lovers together in the Copse. And the evening before the wonderful day they had gone to that very spot again ; and Violet had clapped her hands triumphantly, because this year the Nightingale's song had come before the Cuckoo's—a bright omen, as even grave Milton records. And she had mysteriously gathered some of what she would persist in calling her "own flower," and put some moss-fronds, heavy from the stream, daintily about the stems of the gray-blue blossoms, so that they might keep fresh "till to-morrow !" And on the great day, in the Vestry, while

"Begins the clash and clang that tells
The joy to every wandering breeze ;
The blind wall rocks, and on the trees
The 'new' leaf trembles to the bells ;"

even then his dainty Bride steps up to him coyly, and,

actuated by some whim which I daresay herself could not have interpreted, must be permitted to pin, with the orange-blossom in his coat, a tiny bunch of Wood-violets and Mignonette. Ah, was it to be an omen? But no shadow came over her sweet upturned face, serious in smiles, nor over his proud downward look as he buried a bee's deep kiss in the parting rosebud of her mouth. But now the signing is done, and Violet and Margrave

" Pass on, o'er flowers that thickly fall,
Proud Groom and happy Bride,
Through smiling crowds—a double wall
Set up, the graves to hide— "

pass on into the new and wonderful world of Married life.

I know not how it came about, nor when. It must have been very gradual, nor was it till some years had passed that I noticed it at all; nor till yet later that I would permit myself to believe it. There is always, you know, a certain difference between the first *lover* years of married life, and the succeeding sober Husband-and-Wife years. It seems sad that it should be so; but in poor human experience so it is, that our orange-tree cannot, as in nature, keep on still the blossom with the fruit. The ripe, rough globes are, no doubt, more than the scentful thick white blossom was; still, something is missed in the fruit-time—something is missed. It is the useful and grateful fruit now; but, ah, there was a strange, unutterable charm lost when that first amazing blossom-glory fell!

And I thought at first, and tried to think at last, that this was all the matter between her husband and my Violet, my sweet Violet, my peerless Violet, my darling, my Queen, my life. (Do you understand now that, though no one ever dreamed it, I, who tell the tale, was, and *am* her lover?) And when I knew otherwise, *what* could I do? Of course, *nothing*!

Pardon this one revelation, this one flash of feeling.
Now I retire into the mere matter-of-fact narrator again.

This gradual change did creep over the Summer of
their love. Not on *her* part, no ; only on his. How was
it ?

“ Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him ? Was it touch of hand,
Turn of head ?
Strange ! that very way
Love began ;
I as little understand
Love’s decay.”

Who shall explain it ? The process of falling in love is
too subtle for analysis. The process of love’s decadence
also defies all the nice balancing of the metaphysician.
There the thing is, and there the wonderment is, and there
the bewilderment at it, and the pain. There is nothing to
be done in the matter, but just to acquiesce in a breakage
which no cement can heal ; and to turn away the bruised
and breaking heart, and the utter bankruptcy of all earth’s
delight, towards that kind, sufficient Voice, heeded not
fully, perhaps, till that extreme need interpreted the depths
of its tenderness : “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and
are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ! ” For of Him
only is this thing a certainty, that having loved His own
which are in the world, *He loves them to the end.*

Forgive me again. For my heart is very full when I
think of these things, and this time, and remember my (yet
never my) pretty Violet. Care not to ask how I knew these
things ; what if I were the Rector of the parish in which
the Margraves lived ? Into the background—into the
background, foolish, intruding Self ! To heel ! to heel !

Margrave began to get moody towards her—impatient
with her. For one thing, she became weakly ; unable to
rise to breakfast, and to continue the many winning care-

fulnesses for his comfort (and man *is* a selfish animal) which it had been so delightful at first to receive. He missed these little comfortable pettings, and felt a sort of unreasonable vexation at the return of his lonely hours. In the evenings too, out of the new delight in his new toy perhaps, he had cared for her merry, shallow prattle and chattering, and for her sweet but unscientific trills of the piano. And now she must lie still, and was often too languid to talk much; and almost fainted when, at a half-vexed word of his, she had made a great effort, with trembling lips, to call back the old siren spells which had once, in the grave man's ears, seemed too sweet for criticism. And, ah, when he had helped her back to the sofa, he had turned away with almost a gesture of impatience, and had buried himself in a book. Of course, she ought not, she knew, to have expected him to kneel by her, as he once would have done, and let her tired head lie, golden in the dark, upon his broad, strong shoulder.

But she soon accustomed herself to acquiesce in the less, gently, quite unrepiningly, "It was so good of him to have loved her so much once; and, of course, she could not expect to keep it up always. She had had only her poor little heart and face to give; and now there was nothing new." Did that talk about the Wood-violets ever come into her mind? Women will know.

Now do not misunderstand me. There was no neglect, no cause of complaint. It was an ordinary commonplace sort of married life; perhaps something more. But few of us guess what the true woman's heart suffers in quitting the glory of its warm and golden dreams for that every-day and commonplace reality. The upleaping spring of her yearning never stays; only it hides trickling under the sand, instead of happily bubbling up above it. But men—it is generally agreed—are so different.

One day she said to him, "Dear, I don't seem to get

very strong just yet. And I'm afraid I can't be much of a companion to you, not even just to talk to you about nothing particular, and to make your tea, and play to you."

"Well, child, that can't be helped, I suppose," he said.

"I was thinking it might be nice—you know you told her she must come and see us some day—if Minnie came now. She could be very useful, and would like to come, I know; and could bustle about all day, and play to you in the evenings. Don't you think it would be nice?"

So Mignonette came, and stayed a long while; and poor Violet, although stronger again now, yet had come by degrees, in her weakness, to lean on her, and to acquiesce more and more in giving up to her offered service even much of the ordering of her household. And Mignonette, however pleasant—and pleasant she was—was also a little of the masterful kind of character; and at last, when she came, would almost begin to order and dictate here and there. For Margrave had fallen into the habit of always consulting her about matters, and conversing in preference with the more equal mind; and Violet fell more and more, acquiescently, into the background. For she saw how more and more her Husband found a companion in her cousin, and

"Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is Woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself,
—How often flings for nought!"

So Mignonette, at the Wife's suggestion, came again and again; at last became almost domiciled with them. Nor had the Wife any cause for jealousy, even if she seemed perpetually and increasingly set on one side for the more congenial companionship of another. It was simply the friendship of two minds naturally coalescing on the basis of common tastes, common studies, common

pursuits. What wonder that hours should pass of mutual rapture over German and Italian poets, while, as a matter of course, the child who knew nothing of these things should remain without the inner circle of these sympathies? What wonder that Margrave should dwell, evening after evening, in untold content, over the masterpieces of his favourite musicians, faultlessly, appreciatively rendered? What wonder, in short, the child would reason with herself, that Mignonette should become more, and Violet less, month by month, to her Husband, *once so fond?*

"But it was all *new* then," she whispered, very patiently, with no bitter thought. "And I *said* I never could be a companion to him. And I've got to be less and less one every year. I can't even walk with him—as we used to do—and chatter. But Minnie can, and is never tired, and I'm so silly; I get tired so soon; and if I try to talk, I'm so weak now that I can never amuse him, and then he doesn't listen to me; and when I wait and find he hasn't heard, I'm so weak and foolish that I feel inclined to *cry*, and have to be quiet to keep that great gulp down. I—well, it's only been natural, and what, of course, I ought to have expected."

Margrave did not mean it, I know, but so it was that his growing indifference to the poor pretty little thing deteriorated from impatience, until at last he grew almost unkind—at least at times. She had borne him two little girls, and, at last, a boy. Margrave did not care for children. In later years, when they were growing up, he became a doting Father. But for infants and children in frocks he did not care. The tinier they were, the dearer, however, to the Mother's heart. Many a little timid advance did she make, through the helpless small creatures, towards winning sympathy and interest from the cold, grave Husband and Father. But it could not be expected, she learned to argue to herself, that men should care like women in these matters. And

finding that it worried him to have the little creatures about her when he was by, she would slip away during the German reading, and sit with them, or lie watching them, for hours alone.

It was when Mignonette had left, to live with an aged Aunt, and could no more be spared to stay at the Priory, that the change, of which I spoke, in Margrave, became perceptible. His Wife was now a confirmed invalid. I think there is no doubt that she, unconsciously to herself, was pining under these altered circumstances. She had been brought up in a sort of hothouse atmosphere, this little Violet had; and, you know, flowers used to a hothouse, try as they may to be brave, do involuntarily droop if you set them in a chill and wintry air. So she could less and less even endeavour to fill the place that she once had filled, and that Mignonette had now left—that of pleasant companion to her Husband. And he grew restless as though constantly missing something. And when she meekly tried to fill the want, if she might at all do so, he would at times be even harsh towards her; constantly cold. He chid her from her babes when she carried to them the want of her heart, though indeed she never *meant* to neglect him when she was so long with them that one afternoon because she thought he was to be out till late.

And she cheered her heart as best she could, and tried to think that it was nice and dear of him to want her again, and to be a little jealous of the children. And she determined to be very careful and attentive in future, and to try, too, to rouse herself, and to be a little more like Mignonette, if she could. So with great labour, and many patient days' practice, she worked up Beethoven's "Sonata Pathétique," to be a surprise to her lord and master one evening. It was the anniversary of their Wedding-day; she had felt a little stinging pain because he had forgotten it; but in the evening she had playfully chidden him, and he had been

kind, and had kissed her, and called her his pretty Violet, again. This emboldened her, and gave her heart for her grand essay. So she sat down to the piano. She sat down, and began. He started—she hoped, with pleased surprise—and she steadily pursued her way. At last he dashed on the table the magazine he had taken up to read, and exclaimed, “My good child, *pray* don’t do that: I *cannot* endure it! after your cousin’s playing too!” Then, feeling that this sounded rather abrupt: “You see, dear, it isn’t your fault, but you *cannot* even *play*, much less *interpret*, Beethoven. It is very kind and nice of you to try”—seeing a piteous trembling of the poor lips—“and I fully appreciate the intention. But, you see, it is quite a rare thing to be able to play such pieces. No, don’t be hurt, darling; sing me one of the sweet little ballads you used to sing.”

She tried, with a brave heart, poor child, and chose one of his old favourites—“Oft in the stilly night.” But she broke down in the middle of the first verse. “It’s very silly of me,” she apologised; “but I don’t think I’m very strong yet. I think I’ll go now, and try to have a good night’s sleep, dear. I may be better to-morrow.”

He was vexed with himself; and, oddly enough, but, alas, as human nature goes, not unnaturally, vexed with *her*. He said no more, only lowered his book to receive his good-night kiss; and muttered something, and turned uneasily back to his reading.

But she went up-stairs to her little baby, and had him all alone. And then she hugged and hugged him to her bosom, and cried and cried, quietly, unhysterically, profusely, satisfyingly. And then she talked to her babe—for the first time even to it—of the shadow that had come upon the old glee of her life.

“Ah, sweetest, darling; you are content with poor Mother still. You like to hear her silly old songs, all alone, you and I, don’t you? *You* don’t know anything yet about

those dreadful Bachs and Beethovens. Poor silly old Mother! Yet *Mother*, that *is* a word.

"Ah, I can't be clever and wise and strong, and I haven't a mind; no, like that poor woman, the painter's wife, I remember; I haven't a *mind*, I know. And I don't wonder he's tired; and, perhaps, you would all grow up clever, like him; and then would you get tired of poor stupid old Mother, poor silly old Mother? would you, sweet, sweet pet? . . . But now I don't—I don't—think I shall—I think Mother will be far away before *you* can get tired of her. And *there*, there is no disappointment; and the weary are at rest; 'and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.' Oh, it seems like a Mother, it seems like a Mother. And I *want* a Mother so! Oh, how silly I am! Oh, how kind they used to be to me! Oh, how happy I was! And poor, dear Husband is kind; but—*oh*—baby, *don't you* get tired of me!"

After this she did not try any more to sing; only, soft and low, the old songs, quite alone, to the children. It seemed, as it were, the ghost of warm, lightsome little Violet—that pale child with the patient smile—fading away. Yes, there is no longer disguising it, fading away—fading away.

And, curiously, a sort of repulsion towards her seemed to grow up in her Husband's mind. Too gentle a thing, you would have thought, for a man to dislike; yet the very ways that won him once seemed distasteful to him now. Ah! what is love? Is it mere mesmerism? Looks, words, smiles, tears. "Just that way love began. I as little understand love's decay."

Did I tell you of the "Andrea del Sarto" poem? I think that bitter word struck a chill into the fine and delicate spirit of the loving child, if unintellectual woman.

She had taken Browning's "*Men and Women*" from the Library, and was poring over this one piece, with, alas, a newly grown appreciation of it, from an experience now

of that which had once dimly shaded her life with the tender cloud of an impossible possibility, but which had gathered since into a gloom hiding all her life's sunshine ; and her eyes filled with dew as she read, and understood. " Ah ! " she murmured, " but I am not *quite* like her ; for I *do* love him—I *do* love him ! "

Then she bent over the book again ; and just then her Husband came into his Study. What had made him so hard to his harmless little Violet ? I cannot tell ; there are many unexplainable mysteries in the human mind.

He saw in a glance what she read, and said (ah, how *could* he ?) with a sneer, " What, a student of Browning ? Take my advice, child, do not attempt it. Stocking-knitting and nursery-rhymes are more in your way.—Nay, you cannot help it. Come, I meant nothing ; " for with wide, pitiful eyes she was staring—vacantly, piteously staring at him.

" O Husband," she murmured ; " some women bring a mind—some women bring a mind ; " then she fell back in a faint.

She had become very weak, and there was no one but me to notice ; and when I ventured to speak, what I said was politely over-ruled.

" *She would soon be better.* " Yes, and so it proved ; but not, oh, not in the sense in which the words were spoken.

She became weaker daily ; but her husband was strangely blind to what even bystanders saw. He sometimes surprised her in tears. He was vexed—and shewed it. " It seems so strange, as though you were unhappy. " But she had travelled beyond the stage of being able to hide these things from him now.

One evening—I think she foreknew then what was gathering over her—an impulse came upon her, and a yearning, I suppose, and a remembrance of days that were no more ; and so she drew an ottoman to his feet, and sat down beside him on the rug, and laid her head on his knee.

He would have been spared some sharp stabs in the coming years had he but laid a tender hand on the pale, sunken cheek, and caressed the golden hair ; at least, had he not risen on some paltry excuse and gone to his Study, leaving her alone.

I think that was all. So she just pined among her babes—and faded—and died—and earned the one epithet that none could give her in the olden days. She is a *white-violet* now. And it is a piteous sight to see her :

“ The life upon her yellow hair, but not within her eyes ;
The life still there upon her hair, the death upon her eyes.”

Mignonette came, day by day, to help the widower, and to take care for a while of the children. Sincerely did she grieve, knowing, however, nothing of the blight which had so early stolen over the sweet glad blossom. Her husband, with some old compunctions, followed his child-wife to her early grave in, as she had petitioned, the Churchyard by her childhood's home.

I do not think that anyone ever suspected who, all the year round nearly, kept a cross of *sweet* violets upon the *precious* grave. At least they were suitable now, I knew ; for the innocent, pretty spirit would not, assuredly, lack the charm of the Mignonette, also, now, in the garden of Paradise.

Margrave shed some natural tears ; but his early love seemed really dead, or, at least, in a trance. There was no awakening of it, no self-reproach. That, perhaps, lay wait for him in the future years.



CHAPTER III.

MIGNONETTE used often, spite of what the world might say, to come to the Priory. Her aunt had died, and so her time was again her own ; and she had a great love for dead Violet, and a great friendship for widowed Margrave. Often she would speak to him tenderly of her, and wonder at the cold response her words met. The stream of his old love was frozen, however unaccountably, and the fountains were not broken up yet.

And Mignonette was one of those women on whom men rely. Not a strong-minded woman—no, too womanly for that definition ; but a calm, collected, unemotional woman ; one who could, if need were, stand alone. If the companion of her life should fail her, she would have her own resources. In Violet's circumstances she would have acquiesced, not without pain at first, but with a philosophy which would have quietly, in time, reconciled her to the shadow which had fallen upon her. Sunshine would of course have pleased her most ; but if shade must come, she would have sought and found in this compensations. A nature which would not cry over spilt milk ; which, if the best were gone, could contrive with the second best ; if *all* could not be had, would put up, not discontentedly, with a part ; and this not only by grace, but of nature. But poor little Violet was one of those weaker characters (as Margrave would have said) who just stake their all here on one venture ; and this wrecked, give up, and have done. The love lost about which she had wound her soul, there was nothing more left for her on earth ; only beyond earth there was God ; and she went to Him. The very love of the children, it was dearest to her for their Father's sake. She could, to the last, please herself in talking quietly to them about him, and telling the baby how once he loved her, and about the copse-walk,

and the violets—all in a low, tender, broken-hearted undertone ; because there was no disloyalty in making a confidant of baby, who only looked up smiling at her voice, and was never vexed with her when a tear could not help coming. A fair bubble, the simple life was, which, at a rude touch, just shattered, and gave up all the bright pictures which had imaged themselves on its sphere. There is, to my mind, a touching sweetness about such a frail creature. It makes one terribly responsible to win this kind of love ; still (I know it is a matter of taste), I *do* prefer it to the more elastic character, which, indiarubber-wise, recovers itself after the rudest collapse.

However, there is no doubt which nature is best fitted to buffet with the roughnesses and many shocks which await all alike in this hard world. God made both the strong and the weak ; but I always—from the manner of Jesus upon earth—think that He loves His tenderest flowers best.

But Violet is dead and gone—little, simple Violet. Why try to harp any longer upon a string that has snapped ? Well, I wanted, by contrast, to bring out the points, the stronger points, in the character of Mignonette, her cousin ; not dispraising the one, while yet *my* heart clings to the other with its old dear preference ; and I wanted just to shew how naturally the mind of an intellectual man, such as Margrave, got into close communion with that of his second Wife.

But, stay, I had not arrived at this point in the story yet.

Her shrewd sense, her quiet usefulness, her self-reliant nature, which had long thrown the invalid Wife into the background, shone out, of course, the more brightly in the Widower's home. In a keen grief she might not have been a fit comforter ; but she could soothe and allay the sort of restlessness, and fill the vexing vacancy and sense of *miss*, that the removal of something familiar will cause, if it be only the leaving off a fire when Winter is past, still more if

it be the loss of such a piece of household furniture—to put it in the very lowest view—as a Wife becomes. Of this restlessness Margrave was more the prey than you would have expected from the character of the man ; and whether through a certain *felt*, though undetected, discontent with himself and at the perishing of old hopes and visions, or however it might be, he at this time surprised those who best knew him by, what I am obliged to call, a fretfulness. Yes, no doubt he missed something ; he did not yet know *what*. That discovery lay for him in the future.

You see, however, how since not acute sorrow, but intense *discomfort* rather, was the malady, it was an ache for which a balm might be found. And you will understand, I think, from what has been said, how the energy and firmness of Mignonette, and her more equal calibre of mind with that of Margrave, and her self-reliance, and the *power* that there was in her yet womanly nature—how all these were just fitted to allay the void which, after all, was perhaps a void more irritating than aching.

[Poor Violet ! Dear heart ! I would not even *write* this truth, which would have so grieved thee, but that thou art long since out of the pain of it.]

And who cannot realise the misery of the married man obliged again to return to the bachelor state ? A bachelor with children, nurses, and governesses to see after, dress of little girls, delinquencies of little boys ; and, “more harrowing none, small household troubles fallen to him.” He was not one of those domestic men, handy and adaptable, who can, when the need comes, be, in a sort, Father and Mother too. The children perplexed him : he did not know what to do with them ; he always felt at a disadvantage in their company, and had no gift for amusing them or talking to them, even when he would fain have ingratiated himself in their affections.

So here, as in other things, Mignonette came to f

the gap. When she came in for the day, she seemed all, and more than all, that the poor Wife had been—at least of late years. The children were content and happy; the dinners ordered; the household disagreements settled; all seemed to run smoothly and well; and her coming was always, applied to the chronic discomfort of the household, as oil to the creaking door. And besides all this, there was the converse born of their common interest in books and subjects, and the cheerful evening, instead of the silent dinner-hour and afterwards the oppression of a lonely siesta; and this loneliness succeeding to the having become accustomed to at least the consciousness of someone in the room that one might speak to, even if one does not speak; or at least of someone upstairs whose society one *could* seek, if one should wish it. He who has once been a Husband cannot return in comfort to his contented bachelor condition; nor to her widowhood the Widow, unless she be that thing to weep over—a widow flirt.

So it was that another wedding-day came round, and the faithless old bells rang for it as merrily as for that former day; yet ever, we must in justice say, concluding each octave with the grave stroke that had sorrowfully told, over the woods and meadows of her merry girlhood, the news that sweet Violet had gone away to the Summer-land. For, of course, it so fell that, Mignonette living in the same village, the same bells rang for both weddings.

Thus it came about. Mignonette was so often at the Priory that spiteful things were said. Even if Mignonette could have disregarded the buzz of "poisonous flies," Margrave was not the man to have permitted another to suffer for his convenience. So when she told him that she feared she should not be able, at least for a long time, to come and see him, a thought that had imperceptibly gathered in his mind passed into a decision, and became incarnate in a word.

"I know why you say this, Mignonette. But why should

you *ever* go from me? I cannot spare you. You are necessary now to my being. Why not give me a right to your congenial companionship? Why not become my wife?"

["Congenial companionship," and the lack of sugar-adjectives. Ah, how different had been that first asking of the pretty, simple girl, the child-wife, now—forgotten!]

"Eustace, think! Your love was given once, and, surely, once for all, to the dear child now in her grave. Yours is too strong a mind to be unfaithful to a choice once deliberately made. You speak stirred only by a transitory impulse."

"I speak," he answered eagerly, "the language of mature conviction. It is in later life, and after experience, that the heart's choice is deliberately made. Imagination usurps over our earlier years a disproportionate control. Mistakes are then made; nor is it until the scales of pleasant hallucination fall from the eyes, that Reason, our true guide, is free to choose for us a congenial mate. Once in life most men have an intoxication. It is delicious whilst it lasts; but when it is over we may then legitimately appeal from Reason drunk to Reason sober."

"Ah, Eustace, can it be well to speak thus of a past once so dear and sweet, and of a love surely once so true? Poor child Violet! Did you then, after all, delude her and yourself with a semblance and a dream?"

"*Child* Violet! Yes, it was just so; and as a child she was loved. I am not underrating my affection for her; but I only say that the love which follows experience is a thing different. Mignonette, you do not say nor even hint that you cannot love me as a Husband. I can love and esteem you as my Wife. Our tastes, our ideas coincide; moreover, I shall also find in you a link between myself and that old past. Let us not hesitate to join in one, lives that seem at last 'matched like hand to glove.'"

So they were married. And in the Vestry afterwards

(as Violet had done, poor child, before), Mignonette pinned in her Bridegroom's coat a little bunch of two flowers blended, Wood-violet and Mignonette. It was prettily meant; as claiming for the old love remembrance, and an equal place with the new. But it was a mistake. A sort of shudder came over Margrave, and he murmured, "It seems, then, that it was an omen." And perhaps an undefined pathos lay in the recollection called up of his little Undine-wife, so simple and sweet and pretty and loving, and of the sad days which followed, and of the poor fading girl, and of the end of all.

However, he took his new Bride to Rome, Naples, Venice, Florence; and with this sister-soul, as we may imagine, the refined enjoyment of the galleries was doubled. Foolish Violet! she would have cared nothing for these, except for the pleasure of roaming through them with *him*, and hearing his clever talk about them. She did not care, you see, for those "dingy old masters;" she liked "nice clean *new* pictures." And G. D. Leslie's lovely faces, and Webster's cottage groups, and Landseer's *dear* little monkeys, and all that, she *much* preferred to endless Sebastians, stuck through with arrows, and naked Venuses, and such things. And Rembrandt's chiaro-oscuro, and Titian's and Tintoret's pearly greys and sunny flesh-tints, and all the rest of the connoisseur talk—all this was Hebrew to her. So Margrave must have enjoyed the change; though in old days he did at first laugh lovingly at Violet's want of taste and knowledge, and pinch her ear, and seem only amused, and not morose, at her silly little sayings.

Margrave and his Bride, however, came home after a time, and settled down much into the old ways. There was really very little difference between the state of things which had gradually come about soon after Violet's death, and their present life. The world let them alone, otherwise the days went on much as usual. Mignonette only

took again what had come to seem her natural place in the nursery, in the store-room, at the dinner-table, in the drawing-room.

And now, of course, Margrave did not know what loneliness was. Now he should, he said to himself, surely be happy. He had yearned after parity and community of mind. He had them now; and he had found at last the *companion* that he wanted. It was all very well at first, when it was new, for Violet to sit on the rug at his knee, and prattle all sorts of mere woman's talk, grave or gay; and the very simplicity of her guileless mind, and her worship of him, and her wonder at his knowledge and wisdom, had a charm for him once; and all her little loving ways. "*But*" (in the changed days he muttered, to lull certain uneasy gnawings of memory) "*one gets older, and gets tired of always bon-bons.*" The words of "In Memoriam" used to come, at first, into his mind, as he looked at her beside his feet, and he used to please himself with the parallel:—

"She knows not what his greatness is,
For that, for all, she loves him more.

"For him she plays, to him she sings,
Of early faith and plighted vows;
She knows but matters of the house,
And he, he knows a thousand things.

"Her faith is fixed and cannot move,
She darkly feels him great and wise,
She dwells on him with faithful eyes—
'I cannot understand: I love.'"

Ah, did his heart ever sadden—ever sadden, when afterwards he read his beloved poet, at the sad prophetic parallel of the rest of the description: the change that stole over those two whose "hearts of old had beat in tune," and her refusal to allow to herself the reality of the change?—

- “ Their love has never passed away ;
The days she never can forget
Are earnest that he loves her yet,
Whate'er the faithless people say.
- “ Her life is lone, he sits apart ;
He loves her yet, she will not weep,
Though, rapt in matters dark and deep,
He seems to slight her simple heart.
- “ He thrids the labyrinth of the mind,
He reads the secret of the star,
He seems so near and yet so far,
He looks so cold ; she thinks him kind.
- “ She keeps the gift of years before,
A withered violet is her bliss.”

Did no stab of remembrance come to his heart in reading this afterwards? Perhaps not for some time ; but at last the thaw came over the long frost—the frost in which the tender flower had died.

They were very happy—rather, perhaps, *comfortable*—Margrave and his second Wife. A year or two went by, and still gave him all that he had asked, all that he had expected to find in her—pleasant companionship, fellow-service ; fellowship in intellect, in taste ; affection, esteem.

Still, unacknowledged, if not unperceived, there lurked in the recesses of his nature a *want*. What this was I do not think he could, for some time, discover. But what it was may be stated in one brief word. It was *love*. I spoke of Mignonette as being a “sister-soul.” I did so advisedly. That was just what she was. And that was *all* that she was. A sister's love is much. But yet man wants more than this, as the Creator of man knew well. He wants a *wife-soul*. Something to cling to him ; something to be one with him ; something weaker than he, yet supplying things wanting in him. Something rounder-limbed, without his angles and squareness ; and this in mind as well as in body. Something yielding, dependent,

unable to do without him ; and trusting him enough to let him know this. Something to meet not so much the requirements of the mind, as to answer the yearning of the heart ; for the heart has its imperious demands, if the higher part also needs its complement. With the principle of love in him, something a man must have to embody love to him ; some footing that he can go up to God from. This is, of necessity, more the case in men than in women ; for each seeks in the other that they have not, or have not so much, in themselves.

“ And *women*—things that live and move
Mined by the fever of the soul—
They seek to find in those they love
Stern strength, and promise of control.”

And so it was that, the old craving for companionship appeased, a new craving, undefined, unnamed for some long while, awoke in the man's chilled nature. And so it was that, for a long while he scarce knew why, thoughts that touched the borderlands of regret and remorse began to move more and more in his heart, in which more and more the “ haunting fairness ” of a sweet, distinct face,

“ Pale with the golden beam of an eyelash dead on the cheek,”

kept dawning ; and more and more memory began to dwell upon

“ The touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that was still.”

He wondered sometimes to find how often his thoughts would stray unconsciously into the past years, and back to the old love, and away to the dead wife. The pretty little petting ways that used to weary him at last, he felt that he *missed* them now. Fellowship in intellect was well, but then this was, after all, to be had in *men* also. Fellowship in love ; his heart looked into the years behind, remembering this as once his own ; the tenderness which men cannot

was at the thirteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and pencil-marks enclosed one text in it: "*Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.*" But a folded piece of note-paper was closed in this place; it was worn and broken; he opened it carefully; it was inscribed, "Benhill Copse, April 26, 18—." And within it lay, faded now, the scentless beauty gone on which they alone had to depend, a bunch of wood-violets; the very same, he knew, that she had picked on that date, and a pensive mood had come over her, and she had suggested the possible happening of that very thing which had happened after all, and she had taken heart again easily at his caressing words and at his suggestion that this Violet was in truth a little Heartsease—a Heartsease which had in truth become a sorrowful *Pensée* now. And he remembered how the shade had returned for a moment, and how the tear had again filled the sweet wide eyes as they looked up with that last question, "*Not even when it begins to fade?*"

And the whole scene rose clearly, vividly before him, and that which had been promised, and that which had been done, and that which might have been. And he knew why the big tears crumpled the pages so, and why delicate pencil-marks had taken possession of that text, and where and how she had received consolation, and why she had died. And he knew that his clumsy hands had broken the frail heart that he had taken as a toy to play with. And he knew that the poor child that had pined under his neglect and silently sorrowed under his unkindness was indeed the very Wife of his heart. As a new revelation it came to him at last, clear and distinct, the knowledge which those misty memories and faint regrets had for long been trying to whisper to him. Esteem and affection he felt for Mignonette, but for Violet, *love*. He could still give his living Wife all that she required, all that she had ever had; there would be

no difference. But, though it seemed acknowledged her own too late, the poor dead Wife had her own again.

The strong man's head was bowed on his hands in an anguish, and Violet's book was blotted with other new tears. Ah, if she could have seen ! Ah, but the emptiness of idle wishes, the bitterness of vain regrets ! Llewellyn bending over slain, faithful Gelert ; Edward Gray at Ellen Adair's tomb ; but a grief all in vain :

“ There I put my face in the grass,
Whispered, ‘ Listen to my despair :
I repent me of all I did ;
Speak a little, Ellen Adair ! ’ ”

And I suppose if a sighing passed through the bents, that was all the reply. Most likely the daisies smiled up out of the green turf, and the lambs nibbled the grass in the field hard by, and the glad, indifferent sun shone down warm upon all.

And even so must it fare with the passionate appeals of poor Margrave now, “ *My Wife*,” and again, “ *my Wife*,” dwelling on the word with threefold the earnestness of that first Wedding-day, but with the gladness gone out of the earnestness now. “ Little Wife ! I love, love, *love* you—you *best*, dear, you only ! My Wife, my soul's darling, my own Violet, my Heartsease, *I* too love you to the end ! Ah, forgive this dreary gap, and let love bridge it over ! Ah, perhaps you have given now to someone worthy the treasure that I forfeited. No, *no* ; it must not be so ; we shall meet ; you shall press a kiss of forgiveness on my brow ;—tell me, Dear, tell me that it shall be so ; give some token ; let my guardian Angel whisper one word ! ”

Thus pleaded the strong man in his weakness, the Philosopher in what some would call his folly. But there was no voice nor answer, nor, it seemed, any that regarded.

Did she see and hear ? Did, perhaps, some Angel tell her ? Did the telling comfort and gladden her heart, even

in the satisfaction of that abiding love to which she had fled for refuge? Would she forgive him at last and take him to her heart? Who knows?

Mignonette, when she returned, was greatly pleased to find how devoted a Father, Margrave had become.

"I shall go away and leave you again," she laughed, "if my absence has such a reforming power. Ah, Eustace, is not this little new Violet growing up the picture of our dear first Violet? and she is clever too, like her Father."

Was it to hide a stifled convulsion that Margrave drew his wondering daughter's arms about his neck and hid his face in her breast?



SUNDRY POEMS.

SUNDRY POEMS.

LUCKNOW.



“ROUND us masses ever swarming,
eager-eyed and swarth as fiends,
Waiting for the little few, that wait and
wistly watch for friends ;
Spreading mines of death beneath us,
closer, closer, still below ;
Drop by drop, our cup of ruin filling,
to its overflow !

“O, our darlings and their children ;
—shall our spirits, torn away,
See, with agony’s last spasms, devils
rushing on their prey ?

Shall they weep for mercy,
frenzied, clasping those that,
as they kneel,
Cleave the sweet fair brow up-
turning, with the ruddy drip-
ping steel ?

“We are men, and we are Britons ;
and our fathers, long ago,

Taught us how to die in battle, fearlessly before the foe.
But the gentle girls that love us ;—fiercely will our spirits
strive
Not to quit our striving bodies, leaving *them* on earth
alive !

"It were something, it were something, might we even,
standing by,
With a last clasp, clasp each other, even as we clasped to
die ;
Might our spirits, linked together, float unsevered to the
sky !

"They would speak of us in England ; sorrow for the brave
that died
Fighting for their home and country, with their darlings by
their side ;
And a glory and a lustre on our memories would abide.

"This were something ; but the horror, when they image
us, above,
Torn from earth, and nought availing for the treasures of
our love ;
Seeing them hacked down and butchered, by the godless
devil-drove !

* "With our own hands should we slay them ? in their
simple trust, before—
But our throats grow dry and husky, and our lips can speak
no more ;
Each but gathers from their motion the soul-withering word,
'Cawnpore' !

"Will they *never* come, our comrades ?—O, one bursting
bayonet-sweep !—
And the eyes might find their tears, that have long forgot
to weep.
Will they never come, our comrades ?—O, one mighty
cannon-roar !—
And these patient, haggard faces might be lit with joy once
more."

* See Polehampton's Diary.

Thus they pondered ; men o'erwearied with the long, scarce-
hoping strife ;
Men whose listening hope was pining with a very death in
life ;
And the eager Foe beneath them crept with tiger-crouch
around,—
When its back already writheth for the fury of its bound—
Lo ! a distant “ Boom,” unfolding, muffled, shakes upon
the ear ;—
And they start, and Hope's great anguish tears the troubled
heart like fear ;—
And another :—and another :—’TIS their comrades dear
afar ;—
And they loose their long-pent anguish in a hurricane
“ Hurrah ! ”

Saved ! and she, the pearl of beauty, wooed so long ere she
would yield,
Is not with a stab to totter backwards on the slippery field ;
Saved ! and she, the sweet and gentle, with her children by
her side,
Is not now to writhe, death-mangled, where her gallant
husband died !

Saved !—the tense bow strung so tightly, springs so sudden
slack again,
That the winding tears are trickling through the thin, strained
hands of men !
Saved !—and by the fires of England loving hearts shall
flutter fast
At the tale of that long waiting, and that cannon-roar at
last !

THE LOST SPIRITS.

A FRAGMENT.

HELL to that moment gloomed in silence dread,
And nothing writhed there, save the tortured fire ;
Strange paths and channelled windings of dead gloom,
Made ghastly with red glimmers, stretched away
Untenanted. There was no silence known,
In all God's space, of deadness like to that—
The horror of the waiting silence there.
—But when the thunder-smitten Angels fell,
The thin-edged shrieks of torture struck around
Against the shrinking, hollow-answering walls,
And passed through windings, and returned again
To him from whom they sprang, who back recoiled
In horror from the strange, unknown thing, ne'er
Heard or imagined in his sense till then,
And knew it not as his own utterance now.
Thus, when the first thrill of the torment passed,
And their ne'er-prisoned eyes, walled up in gloom,
Sought forms familiar, mazed with fear, they shrank
Each from the other, never having seen
Save God and radiant Angels : back they shrank
In horror, seeing each, for the first time,
The hideousness of devils : fearing each,
Yet knowing not if he were also thus.

At last they gathered all, in dark conclave,
Waiting their Leader—he whose brightness shone
With such exceeding majesty of light
That it beamed faintly, even by the Throne,
As by the Sun the Morning Star.

He came,
HELL's hosts arose to greet him ; then sank down
In horror at the change. A cry arose,

Terrible in amazement, from the lost,—
Spirits that loved him once, when love was theirs :—
“Where is the brightness of thy glory?
Where the exceeding majesty of thy light?
Is *this* the end of all?
Is *this* to be higher than the Highest?
Where is the radiance of thy presence,
That the Archangels sought—honoured—
That lesser Angels, far away, rejoiced in—
That left a path through heaven’s brightness?
How mighty now is thy ruin!
Vast as the height of thy glory,
So vast the immensity of its depth!
Art thou become even as we?
—Alas, for the death of a glory!
Alas, for the passing of a majesty
Distinct in itself, for which blankness
Glooms even amid the Sons of God,
Clad each in a separate glory!
Is *THIS* now thine appearance?
—How art thou fallen from Heaven,
O Lucifer, Son of the Morning!”

The deep, long anguish of their voices ceased,
And there were some who never from that time
Spake word to other, of despair too huge
To find or seek ease in unloading it.
The shrill wail ceased, but lo! by a decree,
The panged words were from thence immortal made,
And threaded ever the dim paths of Hell,
That the Arch-fiend, wandering oft alone
Through the vast labyrinths and mournful caves,
Would meet a thin, pained Voice that ownerless
Came fraught with agony unspeakable, and swelled
Nearer and nearer, crying bitterly,

"How art thou fallen! Is this now thy form?

How is thy brightness marred!"

Then, close beside him, "*Fallen! Lucifer,
Son of the Morning!*" When he shrank aside

Convulsed with anguish and with horror more

That the lost Voice wandered so lonelinessily,

Than if some bodied lips reproached him:—then

As he shrank back, the Cry fled viewless past,

And he could hear it waning muffled through

The sinuous caves, "*Where is the majesty,*

The glory of thy light?" Then, farther still,

"*Fallen Morning Star! Is this the end of all?*"

Then still more dulled it sank, and to a wail

Confused and murmurous died away, and crossed

With other growing voices, seeking him,

And passing each the other, through the caves

Winding and ringing round him.

This is that

Men know as "*Conscience*," driven from his breast,

That, exiled, haunted him with separate life,

And changed its name for ever to "*REMORSE*."

AN APOLOGY.

[*Made by a Parish Priest on being blamed for trying to work on "in weariness and painfulness."*]

"WITH thy vain works wouldst thou buy Heaven? Poor
fool,

Study more deeply in the Gospel school!"

Nay, madam, how can any price avail

To purchase that which is no more for sale?

Yea, who would be so much devoid of thrift

As still to bargain—for a King's free gift?

Were it for sale, who would presume to try
 With "*filthy rags*"* a King's estate to buy ?
 Or, at such Auction, bid with impious nod
 For that whose price was once—the Blood of God ? †

"Why then work on, in labour and distress,
 Nor leave 'those few sheep in the wilderness' ?"

—Though *this* to purchase, value have I none,
 Yet I, methinks, would fain hear His "*Well done !*"
 At least, avoid the misery of heart
 At *that* voice bidding, "*Slothful one, depart !*"

"VANITAS VANITATUM."

W. M. THACKERAY.

"How spake of old the Royal Seer ?
 (His text is one I love to treat on).
 This life of ours, he said, is sheer
 Mataiotes Mataioteton.

.

"Though thrice a thousand years are past
 Since David's son, the sad and splendid,
 The weary king ecclesiast,
 Upon his awful tablets penned it,—

"Methinks the text is never stale,
 And life is every day renewing
 Fresh comments on the old, old tale
 Of Folly, Fortune, Glory, Ruin.

* Isa. lxiv. 6.

† 1 Pet. i. 18, 19 : *i.e.*, "The blood of Christ, who is very God," if we may thus condense St. Peter's word. Cf. Acts xx. 28.

“Hark to the Preacher, preaching still !
 He lifts his voice and cries his sermon,
 Here at St. Peter’s of Cornhill,
 As yonder on the Mount of Hermon.

“For you and me to heart to take,
 (O dear beloved brother readers)
 To-day, as when the good King spake
 Beneath the solemn Syrian cedars.”



THE ANSWER.

O SHADOW voice of that old lamentation,
 The Bankrupt-hearted Hebrew monarch’s moan,—
 Why gloom the air with tolling iteration,
 Why numb the heart with ceaseless monotone ?
 Why, echo of Earth’s wisest son of folly,
 Dwell ever on that single minor chord ?
 And turn “Glad tidings” into melancholy,
 And come with Cypress to thy cradled Lord ?

Why, when the Heavens are white with thronging Angels,
 Strew earth with funeral robes their steps to greet ?
 Why beat on skulls reply to their evangels,
 When Death lies vanquished 'neath the Victor's feet ?

Hast thou not heard, hast thou not seen, nor read it ?
 The earnest Earth in expectation waiteth,—
 Not for a Dream-birth ;—for Himself hath said it,
 That He, who made, ere long regenerateth !

The whole Creation is in groan and travail,
 The great new birth of Nature is at hand.
 Is life a maze ?—O, let us watch, unravel
 The clue to all that the DIVINE hath planned !



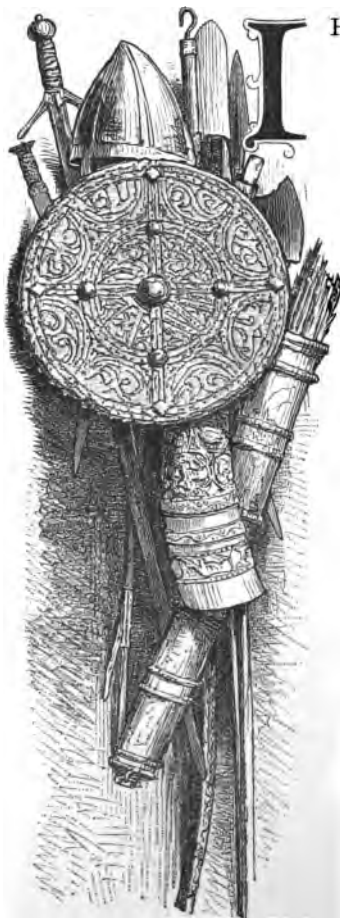
Wilt thou still cry, at even-song and matin,
 That burden, "*All is vanity and loss !*"
 Still write, in Hebrew, and in Greek, and Latin,
This superscription o'er the Saviour's cross ?

—



ENLISTED:

"If he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."—ST. LUKE xii. 38.



I HEARD the voice of Jesus say,

"Soldier ! go forth and fight !

There's bitter warfare all the day ;

There's watching all the night ! "

I sprang up eager at the voice,
Distinct all sounds among :

I faced the foe, I dared the watch ;

For I was strong and young.

I thought it scorn to only fight
As fought the rank and file :

I cheap and light the vigil held,

That 'dured so brief a while ;

"Yea, Lord ; I follow Thee to death,

Secure of victory ! "

'The Foe drew back : the ambush lurked,

— And the first watch passed by.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 " What ? giving ground so soon ?
O'erwearied in the second watch ?
 Where is the first love gone ?"
—For strength had sunk, and zeal grown chill,
 The watch seemed dull and long ;
I had not guessed, I could not know,
 The Foe would prove so strong.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 " Can zeal so soon depart ?
Couldst thou not watch *one hour* with Me,
 Weak flesh, but willing heart ?
Repent, and do the first work yet,
 If hope for more be past ;
Keep that thou hast, at least, that thou
 Lose not thy crown at last !"

O kindly look, at whose reproof
 The tears flow bitterly !
O loving voice, beneath whose breath
 The dying fires leap high !
Thy strength I seek, for broken reeds
 On which I leant before :
With sadder heart, with brow like flint,
 I face the Foe once more !

Youth's conquests held ; not more advance :—
 Shall this my love content ?
Not to lose ground, but to stand still,
 Old zeal and ardour spent ?
And at the last, the occasion missed,
 Praise sad almost as blame ;
Pitying, " Thou hast a *little* strength,
 Hast not *denied* My name."

O, to *affirm* it, Master dear,
 Now, in this special time,
 Now, before foes, not then, at last
 In that unmenaced clime !
 O, to go on from strength to strength,
 And at the last be found
 Red-hilted, warring for the Lord,
 And ever gaining ground !
 In the Third watch alert and brave ;
 O joy, the King to see ;
 To mark His anxious, scanning look
 Light up, beholding me !
 The long watch past ; the sobbing fight
 Ended ; the victory won :
 And O, for *me* this word of praise,
 "SOLDIER OF CHRIST, WELL DONE !"

SWEET SEVENTEEN. (V. M. V.)

* " MY days are in the yellow leaf ;
 The flowers and fruits of love are gone ;
 The worm, the canker, and the grief
 Are mine alone ! "

.
 Ah, sad, such summing up to write
 Of life that scarce had reached its prime !
 Sad, for such reason, to indite
 A Birthday rhyme !

Talents, aye, Genius, God-bestowed,
 The Poet-mind, the influence rare,
 All ended—with a parting ode
 Of calm despair !

* Byron. His last (36th) Birthday. Missolonghi. Jan. 22, 1824.

Thus does the World her votaries treat,
Thus ends her boast, her empty vaunt,
All spent ! Men wake from her deceit
To be—"in want !"

Sad, with the heart too dry for tears,
To brood on the great "might have been !"
To gaze, through vistas of lost years,
On "Sweet Seventeen !"

"Oh precious hours ! Oh golden prime !"
Oh skies so blue ! Oh earth so green !
"Oh affluence of love and time,"
At "Sweet Seventeen !"

What shall we do with lovely life,
Hopes fresh as morn, enjoyment keen ;
A heart with all rejoicing rife,
At "Sweet Seventeen" ?

"Come unto me," the World invites ;
"Be of my revelries a Queen !
Drink of my wine ; taste my delights,
Oh 'Sweet Seventeen !' "

"Come unto *Me*,—oh weary heart !"
[Another voice invites, I ween :]
"When from the world obliged to part,
And—"Sweet Seventeen !' "

"Come unto ME !"—And must it be ?
Must the World have the fresh spring-green ?
The LORD,—the last leaves from the Tree ?
Not—"Sweet Seventeen" ?

Forbid it, GOD !—To Thee I give
Life's Harvest,—not late years to glean !
Take me, [henceforth Thine own to live]
At—"Sweet Seventeen !"

“THE GRAND OLD NAME OF
GENTLEMAN.”

A Study.

“THE GRAND OLD NAME OF GENTLEMAN.”

A Study.

“ And thus he bore without abuse
The grand old name of Gentleman ;
Defamed by every charlatan,
And soiled with all ignoble use.”—*In Memoriam*.



MANY hues make up light ; many ingredients a salad ; many qualities the Gentleman. Like both the above, he is no mixture of unamalgamated parts, but a perfect whole. And as, again, beautiful sounds amid discords and without connection are not Music, so noble traits may be found in a person, and yet, being rare, unsustained, unbalanced, out of harmony with others, will not constitute the Gentle-

man. Many a one may be credited at times with isolated acts that are gentle and noble. But what we want is the Gentleman ; the complete harmony : the man always noble—the perfect cube.

Yet if we seek to define the Gentleman, we must analyse ; must take separate acts, constituent principles, just as you

resolve light by a prism into its component parts. Light is not blue, yellow, etc., but it is made up of divers colours. And this is no inapt illustration ; for indeed, to depict this character, we have to dip the brush into the most delicate, subtle, rainbow tints. And here we are reminded of the caution—

“ What skilful limner e'er would choose
To paint the Rainbow's subtle hues ? ”

And the justice of the warning must be confessed. For essaying to write upon the ideal of the Gentleman, it is certain that the paper must be a mere Essay, in the true sense of the word, and no finished treatise. Who could exhaust the subject ? Who could do it justice ? But the results of individual thought and observation may be put down, and perhaps set some outsiders a-thinking ; and those who are already collectors of the subtleties which make up the character may find some few specimens in the cabinet of another which they have not yet placed in their own. At least, I find myself always ready to collect from other drawers, and consider an inspection well rewarded if but one new point be gained from each.

So I would jot down some contributions towards the definition of this character. There is need that it be defined, for the words are true that the name, the grand old name, is nowadays more than ever “ defamed by every charlatan,” and “ soiled with all ignoble use.” Not only are mere accidents or accessories regarded as though of the essence, but things which are quite foreign to it, and which sometimes actually encumber and obscure it, seem to be thought of almost as though constituent parts of it. Great riches ; high position ; much ostentation—what have these really to do with the character ? Nor will those of the blood be deceived by them. But, with many, do they not pass off paste for jewels by their showy setting ? The “ kindly-hearted Earl,” in “ Enid,” would prove, if proof were needed,

how the *Gentleman* still remains when all these things have left him. Geraint too ; when—

“ Yniol’s rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but through these
Princelike his bearing shone.”

We must start, then, by disencumbering our thought of things external merely—rank, wealth, power, show—all the mere setting of the stone. And further, of things also which, though undeniably advantages and accessories, are yet not of the *essence* of this character ; are accidental—can be dispensed with—though they adorn where they may be had. High breeding ; liberal education ; familiarity with the ways of the best society ; polished behaviour ; easy manners ; experience of books, and men, and countries ; absence of shyness ; an acquaintance with what is not mere littleness in etiquette ;—these may be the *cutting* of the jewel. Yet, though many of these will be assumed in this study, let it be declared at the outset that the *jewel* can be without them. Captain Cuttle had few of these adjuncts, yet who does not perceive “Gentleman” written upon his brow ? So, too, with Mr. Peggotty ; and, in truth, Charles Dickens is great at giving the rough jewel. I do not recollect a good instance, among his characters, of the polished gem. I myself knew a plain village Carrier in whom lurked much of the gentlemanly feeling. My wife and myself were, in my first Curacy, for a few weeks, in the cold months, lodgers in his house. During that time this man laid aside his evening pipe (ye smokers, estimate this act of self-denial !), nor could be, by any persuasion, prevailed upon to resume it, having settled in his own mind that it *must* be annoying to a lady. Many would have laughed, seeing him leaning in his smock on a gate in the chill evenings, his beloved long clay enjoyed there without check, had I pointed him out as a true Gentleman. But in my mind he ranks as such. He

is one proof of many that the character may exist quite independent of accidental advantages, though of course these are of value in setting it off; and without them it may be held to be rather latent than developed: rather the *δύναμις* than the *ἐνέργεια*. Not only the absence, however, but the presence of these accidents, may mislead us in our search:—the dulness of an uncut surface, the glitter of a paste, may alike deceive.

Having rejected the mere setting, and allowed that the cutting, even, is not absolutely necessary, we will now examine the gem. I take from my cabinet some random notes of the true Gentleman, and set them out as they come.

In this character, as the rule, we find a nobility of *thought* and *intention*—a heart that is ever *aspiring* towards what is high, and noble, and great; naturally attracted by a certain affinity with these, and naturally repelled, as if by instinct, from what is low, and mean, and little. One test of this disposition is the judgment of motives in others. Does he most *naturally* suppose these to be pure and lofty, or corrupt and base? Watch what are his affinities, what is his instinct, in a doubtful case. Where there is an open choice, will he swoop towards carrion or soar towards the sun? Not that he is to be a simpleton, easily taken in by transparent shams, nor a mere Utopian, shutting his eyes to facts. But, in the wide space of neutral ground between *certain good* and *certain bad*, to which bound does the bias of his mind sway him? In the large realm of *possibilities* will he be hopeful or suspicious as a rule? The true Gentleman is never a suspicious man, never a depreciator. He could not write as did Pope, in a jaundiced hour, of Addison. He never gratuitously supposes meanness in another; in the general he is hopeful, and hardly made to distrust. Thus, in a world of extreme littleness and meanness, especially in the matter of imputing of motives and in the prevalence of low suspicions, you are, in the society of the Gentleman,



raised into a higher atmosphere ; you breathe freer. Without effort, and *naturally*, he is walking on an eminence above those pettinesses, those low considerations, and spites ; and even if you stand not on it usually, you are, in your intercourse with him, raised to his level. You left the stinging midges, the foul vapours, below in the valley. Your point for the time is higher, your view less narrow ; you stand and look down upon the dull mist that roofs the petty world.

It may be laid down as a first condition that the Gentleman has that just appreciation of self which constitutes Self-respect. Now it is difficult to convey a true idea by this word ; for some would understand *pride* by it, this being one of the flattering names invented to mask the ugliness of specially the Devil's sin. And of all qualities that the Gentleman must *not* have, perhaps I would point out, pre-eminently Pride. A proud man cannot possibly be a true Gentleman. But the Gentleman has a just appreciation of self—he respects himself. Now this *just* appreciation will be the very thing which prevents pride. He will have a mournful humility, possessing an ideal, short of which he finds himself to be ever falling. Still the very possession of this ideal will make him respect himself—will raise him by the consciousness of a latent greatness above aught undignified and unworthy. Of necessity, therefore, and essentially, a humble man, he is not in the least cringing or abject. A gentleman is a MAN. And he realises what is contained in that word—the high descent, the magnificent destiny. So in the presence of his God and of his fellow-men he is never abject ; he is always manly, always keeps self-respect ; his humility is never a mean thing, it is a power that raises, not a weight that degrades. In him the "taking the lower room" leads surely to the "going up higher" ; not from intention, but in result.

And this self-respect prevents his being over-sensitive to slight or affront. He is in a measure *αὐράκης*, *self-sufficient*

—a word again commonly perverted from the good sense in which I would use it. So that, upon occasion, he can retire into this castle of his own self-respect, and consciousness of worth though but in embryo, and thus mildness and dignity can in him go hand in hand, commanding probably in the event the respect also of others. Quite feeling that there are in him such inadequacies and defects that it is always excusable, and often just, that others should think slightly of him, he yet is conscious of at least incipient, struggling, worth and nobility that make him, in the Divine and in the larger human view, no object merely of contempt. He can be, on occasion, company for himself; he has, so to speak, sympathy with himself; he understands himself, and retires on this inner consciousness when misunderstood by others; he is, in a sense, independent of them. Much of the character is founded on this self-respect and on the self-resource springing from it. As thus:—the Gentleman is, of course, not envious. Now his own self-respect helps much against this meanness. He knows, in a measure, both what he is and what he is not. He retires, from misunderstandings and affronts, upon his consciousness of some worth. He often, from the possession of that self-knowledge which can perceive, understand, and appreciate greater excellence in another, acquiesces in being left in the background. There must always be some degree of excellence in the man who can do this. There must generally be some amount of consciousness of it. Not indifferent to the opinion of others—for the Gentleman is never a cynic or a prig—he is yet not dependent upon this. When it is unjust he can find consolation within himself. When it is just he assents to it, and accepts it; whereas the envious man, not having this ballast of self-resource, is liable to be overturned by every gust.

Another result of this self-respect, in the character, is that obligations are not a trouble to his mind. This is a

littleness from which it keeps him free. As a king he takes what was kingly offered ; there was no just deference, no generous kindness, which he was not before prepared to render to his utmost ; therefore he is not conscious of being bound, as though a new, distasteful thing, to any due courtesy or respect. Having a real dignity, he is not always jealously guarding it ; it rather takes care of him than he of it. Benefits intended to bind him to aught unworthy he would of course reject. But, holding gratitude to be a beautiful and noble quality, it never occurs to him to wish to guard against the *pleasure* (not the *necessity*, it does not so put itself to him) of being grateful. With a quiet nobility the Gentleman will confer, with a quiet nobility he will receive, favours, benefits, kindnesses, little and large. His thanks are never those of the mendicant ; his favours never those of the patron. There is no soreness, no sub-protest of alarmed dignity, in his acceptance of kindnesses ; there is not the least hauteur, or, worse, forced and obtruded absence of this, in his conferring them. The Gentleman is gentle, sweet, dignified, easy, and natural, alike in the character of benefactor, or of obliged.

Now we come to a second broad, general basis of the character. The Gentleman has a just appreciation of others. Partly as the result of the former qualification. Partly he learns admiration or compassion, hopefulness or forbearance, from that knowledge of the war of noble and base within himself. We cannot separate his estimate of others from that of himself, for the latter will mostly shew itself by the former. It will be the ray that comes to us from the star. In two words, however, we may sum up much of the motive-power of his conduct. The Gentleman is just, and also generous, to others ; neither of these *first*, neither before the other, but both together and at once. It is a mistake to suppose that one can exist without the other. Is he really a just man who has no mercy nor kindness,

who cannot take into account the "delicate differences," the numerous possibilities of acts and motives? More obviously the unjust man cannot be the truly generous.*

The Gentleman, therefore, is a just man. Let it not be here objected that, whereas the Gentleman is known to us by *actions*, we are lingering among *principles* to define him. We at first trace the streams up to their source; and we are in search not of *single acts*, or of them only so far as they indicate the *character*. He is just, then: he gives to all their due, of respect, consideration, honour, praise, blame, admiration, forbearance. This quality of justice, thought out, will be seen to be an important foundation of the character of the Gentleman. Its effect is very great upon the nobility of many of our thoughts, words, and deeds.

Then he is essentially generous; and on this follows that he is large-hearted, tender, merciful. The petty interests, the narrow judgments, the low suspicions, the mean motives, that go to make up selfishness, and harshness, and cruelty, are abhorred by his mind, and these bats avoid its sunshine. Herewith, also, he will be patient and forbearing. How many flaws are caused by irritability and impatience, in characters that have a shaping of the true nobility! Loss of dignity, of sweetness, of authority; failings alike in justice and in generosity. Calm and equable, though not impassive or cold; patient, though not sluggish; forbearing, but not slovenly, nor passing over that which should be noticed—this must the Gentleman be. Closely connected with this largeness of mind will be that hopefulness for others before spoken of. In a doubtful case he is of those

"Who nobly, if they cannot know
Whether a 'scutcheon's dubious field
Carries a falcon or a crow,
Fancy a falcon on the shield."

* Cf. Charles Surface in "*School for Scandal*."

Beauties, not deformities or flaws, the more readily catch his eye; his affinity closes with its like. He is not always on the look-out for earwigs within the petals of the rose. He can, however, be indignant: never with weakness, chiefly with aught mean, base, little. His affinity with their opposites makes his repulsion of these a matter of course. "I never *knew you*—depart from me."

Yet, though capable of strong indignation, and, on occasion, sarcastic, he is never scornful or sneering. A sneer is the weapon of all most familiar to the mean mind. There is nothing God-like in it. Nor does the Gentleman, where possible to avoid it, deal in snubbing. Respect for others makes him unwilling to humiliate them; while, as for guarding himself, the atmosphere of his own self-respect—an influence not obtruded, but felt; intangible, but real—this, and grave disapproval, sometimes deepening to sternness, enable him to check ignorance or insolence; for though never a proud or a vain man, he is a man with whom it is not easy to take a liberty. He withdraws into himself from an uncongenial touch; yet, in doing so, would, as a matter of preference, rather avoid hurting, or making the difference felt.

Thoughtfulness and Tact are great constituents of the character. Indeed, this element of thoughtfulness makes much of the difference between the merely good-natured, kind-hearted man, and the Gentleman. Many a one would do kindnesses, pay attentions, if only he thought of them, *whereas the Gentleman does think*. And much of the perfection of the character depends on the higher or lower degree of this attribute. We find obvious thought, more refined thought, and a subtlety of thoughtfulness which gives the nail-finish. And to this, Tact is closely allied: the being "in touch" with others. Who does not know the difference, from different people, of the same act done, the same word said? The very same in substance, how incal-

culable the difference resulting on the way of speaking or doing it ! That which from one seemed a delicate kindness, from another may appear a coarse insult. This especially in the instance of advice or reproof. What a pity that our translation * has missed the delicate, gentlemanly tact of that finished Gentleman, St. Paul, and headed his address to the refined Athenians with clumsy, offensive words : "*I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious*" ! Whereas he did say, "*I perceive* (as a ground to go upon) *that ye are deeply reverential.*" †

One most important point to be marked is the noiselessness of the character ; the naturalness, and ease, and absence of effort or elaboration.

"They live by law, not like the fool,
But like the bard, who freely sings
In strictest bonds of rhyme and rule,
And finds in them, not bonds, but wings."

Nobility with them is not some extra finery to *put on* ; it is their *every-day dress*, and so they are at ease in it, while those who bring it out but for Sundays and Holidays wear it creased, and uncomfortably, and ever as with the fear to stain it. I suppose that when our Court costume was in common wear, people did not look so stiff and awkward in it, nor was the sword liable to trip them up. So the Gentleman finds that no restraint which is never laid aside from him.

"The churl in spirit, up and down
Along the scale of ranks, through all,
To him who clasps a golden ball,
By blood a king, at heart a clown ;

"The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil
His want in forms for fashion's sake,
Will let his coltish nature break
At seasons through the gilded pale :

* Also the Revised Version.

† Δεισιδαιμονεστέρους :—Deeply "God-fearing."

" For who can always act ? but he
To whom a thousand memories call,
Not being less but more than all
The gentleness he seemed to be,

" *Best seemed the thing he was*, and joined
Each office of the social hour
To noble manners, as the flower
And native growth of noble mind."

Thus Tennyson, of a Gentleman, his friend.

And one result of this naturalness is, that in his actions there is an absence alike of obtrusion and of elaborate shrinking back. He can afford to do a noble act without having it known. In truth, it is to him nothing wonderful, special, and out-of-the-way ; nor does it strike him that others should regard it as at all remarkable.

" And, should their own life plaudits bring,
They're simply vexed at heart that such
An easy, yea, delightful thing,
Should move the minds of men so much."

But on the other hand, for the same reason he can, if need be, endure publicity. The thing does not appear to him so extraordinary that he should make a great fuss or parade about hiding it. A lamp ever lit ; place it behind a screen, and it still burns on ; let it be set upon the table, and its mild, kind light is as cheerfully diffused.

Some general notes have now been set down, and before proceeding to consider the character in a few of life's particular relations, it needs only to say that all the above marks will be found in things large as well as in things little, and in things little as well as in things large. I dwell on this because either is sometimes neglected, and the attention fixed solely upon the other. The great difficulty is to keep a balance, to preserve all the harmonies of the character, to be *teres atque rotundus*. The most common danger,

however, will be the disregard of little things. Let it be urged, then, that little touches make, little flaws mar, rare and perfect excellence.

And before going on, it may be permitted me at this stage to say that I do not see but that the perfect Gentleman must be the consistent Christian. Indeed, incidental polish having been dismissed as not of the essence, I would say that the perfect Gentleman and the perfect Christian would be one and the same.* I am not speaking of "self-elected saints," but of those in whom goodness is worn gracefully and naturally, and in whom holiness is lovely,—

"Not these : but souls, found here and there,
Oases in our waste of sin,
Where everything is well and fair,
And God remits His discipline ;
Whose sweet subdual of the world
The worldling scarce can recognise,
And ridicule, against it hurled,
Drops with a broken sting, and dies :"

men who possess that wisdom which "not only *is*, but *seems*."

Let me recall two or three precepts which would go far, if really kept, to make a man a Gentleman, or a woman a Lady. "Honour all men ; be pitiful ; be courteous to all. Follow after love, patience, and meekness. Bear ye one another's burdens ; be kindly affectioned one to another ; in honour preferring one another. Given to hospitality.

* The old Maréchal de Mouchy, aged eighty, and his wife, were among the first to be taken away to death. He was accused of having been "an agent of the tyrant in distributing sums of money for the payment of refractory priests." He was also attacked for having in his room "un ci-devant Christ." The "*Histoire des Prisons*" says that the aged pair were an object of respect to all the *détenus*, and were never spoken of without a sort of veneration. As they passed out to execution between a line of respectful and sorrowful spectators, one of them called out, "Courage, M. le Maréchal !" He turned round, and replied in a firm voice, "A dix-sept ans j'ai monté à l'assaut pour mon roi, à plus de quatre-vingts je monte à l'échafaud pour mon Dieu. Mes amis, je ne suis point à plaindre."

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits; provide things honest in the sight of all men." Indeed, I would instance all the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, with the very principle which underlies them,—one universal brotherhood, membership, and nobility of connection. What wisdom of broad yet subtle application is there in this one precept:—"Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another!" Then how noble is this program:—"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"!

I might not, in a merely secular * paper (for I am only quoting these words as noble illustrations of my point),—I might not, in such a paper, bring forward the One perfect Instance of every perfection; the One Faultless Pearl; the One Flawless Diamond; "the first true Gentleman that ever breathed." But, reverently and lovingly passing by this, let me instance the writer of the above precepts, St. Paul, as the ideal of a Gentleman. Witness his delicacy and tact, shewn pre-eminently in advice and reproof: "*I praise you not*,"—this is his euphemism for "*I blame you*;" "*I partly believe it*," his gentle way of putting his demur, when told of the divisions amongst his children. Mark his delicate tact with Festus, Agrippa, Felix. Note his dignity and sweetness in receiving the gift from the Philippian Church—the grace with which he rejoices that "your care of me hath flourished again;" then the anxious guarding against

* *The Contemporary Review*.

hurting their feelings, also the hopefulness for them :— “wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.” Let anyone curious in these points read from the 10th to the 21st verse of Philippians iv. The passage is full of the subtle touches of the character. Professor Blunt, in the first of his lectures on the “Parish Priest,” admirably traces out this characteristic of St. Paul, though from another point of view than ours. And, once more, if any reader would possess a perfect model of consummate tact and refined delicacy, let him study, in the Epistle to Philemon, St. Paul’s urging of a request that might well have been a claim.

I may not here enlarge upon this instance, although I am now only dealing, with a secular purpose, and from a secular point of view, with inspired words ; but I would suggest, to collectors, the study of the writings and life of St. Paul, merely now with the view of regarding the character in its highest perfection and rarely attained finish. And if any should yet question the propriety of introducing into this paper such an instance and such thoughts, let me be bold to remind him that much of our ordinary littleness is traceable to our letting slip the thought of our high birth and connection. Fallen indeed for awhile from our place at Court, we forget that our place there is that of sons and Princes. Christianity is the revelation to us here of the Etiquette of Heaven.

It will be necessary, however, to turn from principles to acts, and to consider the Gentleman in some particular relations. To give some little plan to what must anyhow be desultory jottings, we take him first in Society and then at Home.

I think that a delicate test is to be found in his manner and bearing towards Superiors. He avoids that tendency to over-deference which is the commoner fault ; *also* that slight inclination to an over-independent manner, that standing

on its guard to which the mind, if above the more common weakness, is apt to swerve. The *αὐτάρκεια* comes in here:—he can afford to do without them: again, the self-respect which averts the constant fear lest he should be humbled or mortified. The great thing, the result of these principles, is, that he is at his ease. Due deference to others is natural to him, so also is the consciousness of what is due to himself. He can quite well dispense with the notice of those above him in the social scale, but he has stamina and ballast enough to enjoy their society without an ever-present sense of difference whispering him to be on his guard against a slight. And if the superior in position should not be a Gentleman, *i.e.*, should obtrude that superiority, why, the advantage instantly changes round and is on the side of the Gentleman, and he knows it, though too true to his character to make this knowledge patent. True Gentleman meets true Gentleman, recognising the brotherhood through the accidental and trivial distinctions of this brief state: they acknowledge these differences, but are not encumbered by them. The Gentleman does not show his nature by rejecting or disregarding those decencies and proprieties even which only belong to this evanescent condition, but by wearing them easily. The ceremonies and etiquette of Society are but as our clothing, not of our essence, nor to last beyond this state. But while the need for them does last, the thing is to wear them as being natural to us, and not as though a restraint. I really believe that there are many who, with no scruple to do a kindness to those in poor estate, from any thought, natural to the lower mind, of fear of imperilled dignity, yet would shrink from shewing an attention to the great, for fear of misinterpretation. But the true Gentleman has learned to dismiss from his rules of action the over-sensitive consideration of how they will appear. Not that, within proper bounds, the appearance of his actions will be disregarded. Within these

he is not too nervous about his dignity to be ready to explain, or to guard against misinterpretation. Take the capital instance of St. Paul. He, an Apostle, would yet take a brother with him to administer the alms of the churches. "Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us ; providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

Yet, withal, a true Gentleman has courage to do, if necessary, things which may *appear* to be, but are not, ungentlemanly.*

Next, to take him among equals, let us consider the instance of conversation, which is, of course, a great mark always ; for "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," *i.e.*, our words are little sample-bags of the stores within. For one thing, then, the Gentleman will never monopolise conversation—

" A civil guest

Will no more talk all than eat all the feast."

(By-the-way, many delicate precepts and nice touches germane to the subject are to be found in George Herbert's "Church Porch.") The Gentleman will not break into the speech of another, nor listen ill-concealing his impatience to be relieved of his own say. He will rather bring out others than exhibit himself. In fact, he joins in conversation quite as much to learn as to teach. How very far will he be from the littleness of which Rogers, the poet, accuses himself, namely, so great a hankering to be heard, that, failing otherwise, he set himself to attract attention by ill-natured speeches ! If need be, the Gentleman can be entirely a listener, and that in subjects upon which he is competent to speak. But he both can and will speak if it be demanded of him, or if occasion invite. He is calm and courteous in

* Instance : Lancelot's one discourtesy, and its motive. ("Elaine.")

arguing; "and, If he be master-gunner, spends not all That he can speak at once, but husbands it, And gives men turns of speech." But this patience, fairness, and quietness in argument are a true, and perhaps a rare, mark of the Gentleman. It greatly requires both attributes—just appreciation alike of self and of others. He is a man open to conviction;—I allow him to be a little impatient with the unlovely combination of conceit with ignorance.*

I need hardly say that he is not one of those who, after dinner, when the ladies have left, and talk and wine have removed restraint, as though relieved from fetters, run into coarse anecdote and jest as their natural element. He has no tendency towards, no affinity with, manure; nothing in him of the foul blue fly; his instinct is that of the bee, which seeks the sweet, and extracts sweetness from everything.

Again, he is always truthful and sincere; will not agree for the sake of complaisance or out of weakness; will not pass over that which he disapproves. He has a clear soul, and a fearless, straightforward tongue. On the other hand, he is not blunt or rude. His truth is courteous; his courtesy truthful; never insincere, yet, where he truthfully can, he *prefers* to say pleasant things.

He is not curious; or he restrains his curiosity. He is, of course, the man who, either actually or metaphorically, walks by a window without a side-glance, whether of purpose or inadvertence. He is, I need not say, free from that ill-breeding which would press upon a person when some unguarded word has betrayed that he has a secret. If something of confusion reveal that a slip has been made, the Gentleman will recede, or appear not to notice, or turn the conversation.

He is above gossip, and is not the man to whom you would bring a petty tale. He cannot stoop to little wrang-

* Yet, cf. St. Mark xii. 24.

ling. He is not diseasedly tenacious of real or fancied rights.

Here I leave the conversation of the social gathering for the gathering itself, with its circumstances. I shall mention a point almost too small, one would think, for notice, but one which experience proves to be a point of importance in this small world, and in the still smaller world of Society which exists upon it. The consideration of whether, at a dinner-party, he shall take in the lady of the house, or of what position he shall receive, is never one whose anticipation causes anxiety, or whose retrospection causes mortification to his mind. Really, these little jealousies of Society, the petty measuring and balancing nearly equal claim against nearly equal claim, are things which his true dignity can afford to ignore. At the same time, the usual respects and courtesies of life are always rendered, and also exacted, by him; not touchy, nor over-punctilious, he yet will not treat others, nor will he himself be treated, in a slovenly way. I remember a thorough old Gentleman, my first Rector, telling me of his bringing such carelessness and superciliousness to book. Upon his newly coming to his Rectory, one of the country gentry, no distant neighbour, kept asking him, in a free and easy, not to say a patronising way (without having taken the trouble first to call on him), why he didn't come over and see him, come and lunch, &c. At last my friend turned quietly upon him and said, "Excuse me for reminding you that if you wish to make my acquaintance, it is in your own power to do so. The customs of Society place the initiative with you. I see no reason why in my case they should be reversed."

An instance of scrupulous gentlemanly regard for the customs and courtesies of Society occurred to myself in this my first curacy. A neighbouring incumbent had been away from home when I came, and thus unable to call on me. Immediately upon his return, a note was sent asking me to

accompany my Rector, who was to dine with him. I really considered this, under the circumstances, all that was necessary to satisfy a far more sensitive dignity than mine. However, in the afternoon of the day on which I was to dine with him, he walked over—five miles in the heat—to make his call first. You might call this punctilious ; but remark, there was just that degree of superiority in his position which made it necessary to forego no courtesy or even ceremony towards me. For if the Gentleman were lax at all in the ceremonies of social life, he never could be so towards one in any way not his equal ; never where it might possibly seem that the omission was through superciliousness or shewed the airs of the Don.

However, this care of the ceremonies which are the necessary hedges and fences of the somewhat unreal and unnatural state in which we live here, is one notable mark of the Gentleman. He will never presume, never take the least liberty ; he never puts himself in a position in which he might receive a snub.* He is never *over-familiar* with his friends, never goes to the extremity of the tether of familiarity permitted, or even offered. A brother of mine, to whom I trace much of my early bent to this subject—this elder brother had been invited always to pass through the grounds of the Squire of the parish in order to save a round. He never did so, however, without calling at the Lodge for admission, though he knew where the key hung, and had been told to take it when he pleased. And this reticence or restraint within bounds of his privileges with friends, instead of straining them to the limit, or even beyond, is one special mark of this character. I think something of this feeling is really almost the rule in what are called, in Society parlance, the lower classes. At least in the country, there is ever found a great delicacy and shrink-

* Compare Leigh Hunt's "*My dear Byron*," and the snub received from his correspondent (but perceived not), "*My dear Lord Hunt*."

ing from any seeming to intrude or presume. Retired well-to-do servants and little landowners—you will often experience difficulty in persuading these to come to the front door, or to enter the drawing-room, even when they have come with some small offering of fruit or the like.

Before leaving the consideration of the Gentleman among equals, I will mention one abomination from which anyone with the least right to the name will most sensitively shrink—this is the sharing in people's hospitality, and then afterwards, among others, making fun of them, their table, their arrangements, or their households, repeating, in short, anything that would be to their dispraise or would lower them in men's eyes. When I was admitted into any household as a guest, a confidence was then placed in me which it would be deeply unworthy to betray. Another act, of course quite foreign to the Gentleman's mind, is the asking one to play or sing whose playing or singing is ridiculous, for the purpose of making him or her a laughing-stock. Anyhow, the Gentleman could not be behaving in any way, by look or gesture, behind the back of one who has in all good faith and simplicity acceded to the request to become a caterer for his amusement, of which the detection by its object would cause him confusion or shame.

I have already touched on the conduct of the Gentleman towards those in inferior position. Much lies in what has been already hinted—namely, that he will be careless to any others rather than to them; he will err rather on the side of punctiliousness than of slovenliness. Of course he is not clumsy enough to make this noticeable, or to obtrude it. He would steer clear of an awkwardness which would make ceremony offensive by overdoing it, or, through its elaboration, betraying the motive, and therefore the idea in his mind. Thus also, in his intercourse with those of lower rank, he can afford to dispense with the very least giving to

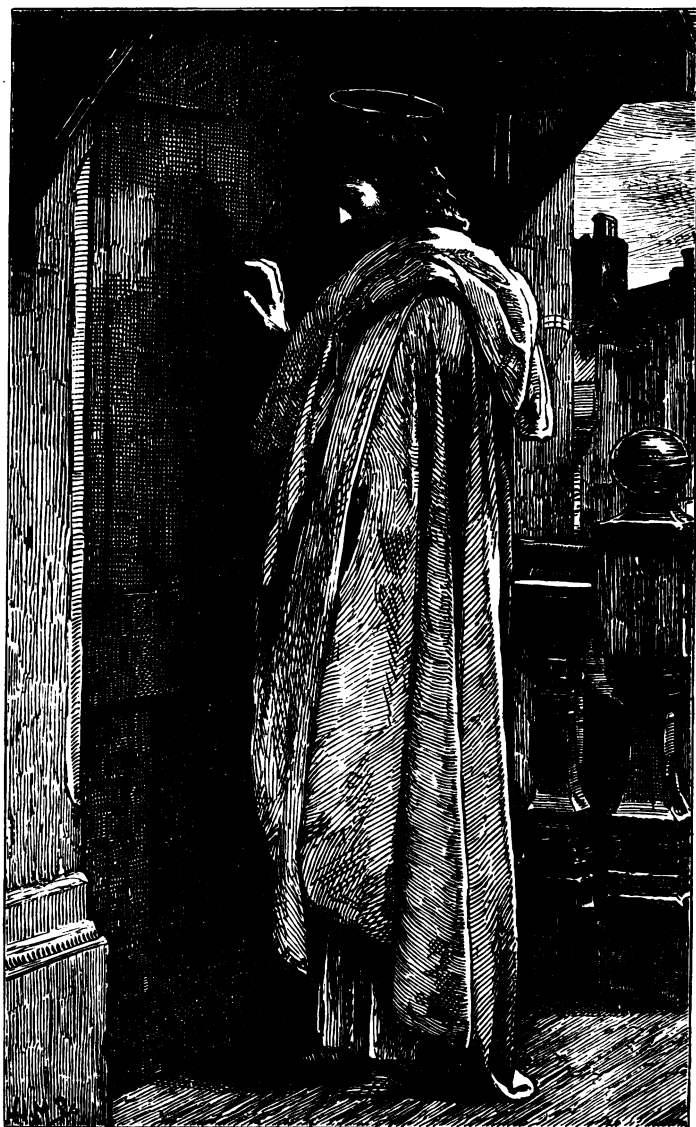
understand that he is condescending. Indeed, he does not feel himself to be doing so, having a larger view of things than from this world's hillocks, and so he is able to be simple and natural. Thus Lancelot :—

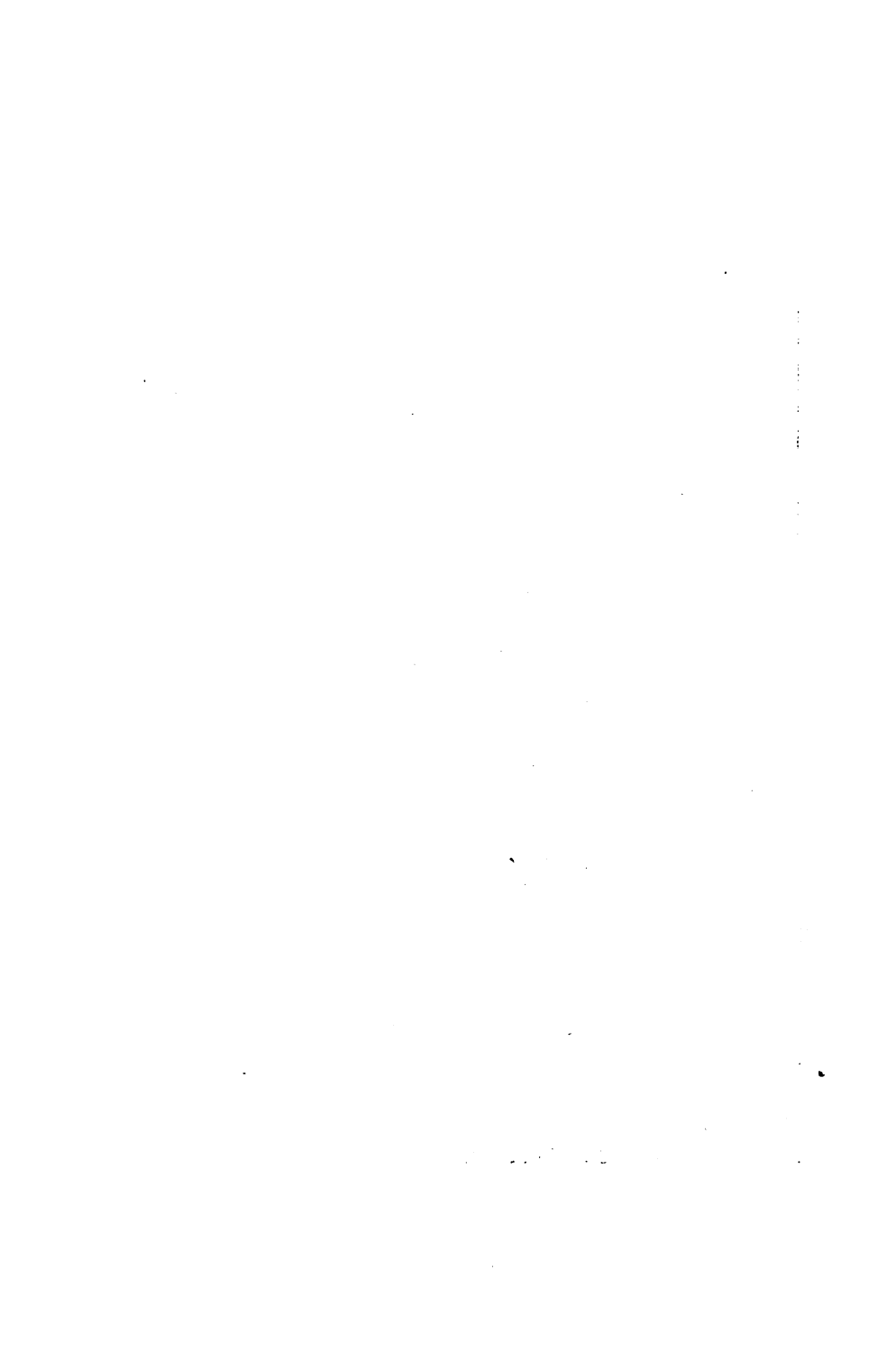
" Then the great knight, the darling of the court,
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall,
Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain
Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind."

The Parish Priest has many opportunities of showing this phase also of the character, and much necessity for doing so. This courtesy without condescension, and this carefulness without paraded ceremony, are most desirable in his case ; are also keenly appreciated. I do not say that he will refrain from entering a cottage without knocking, or with his hat on, or when meals are toward, nor that he will shun the careless or prying glance ; because these are coarsenesses, and we were discussing rather the more subtle marks. But he will ever remember that the poor man's house is that poor man's own ; nor will he take advantage of his position, and that necessity which may fetter the tongue of the poor, to make his visits intrusions, nor to speak to the poor as he would not be allowed to speak to the rich, except in so far as a more plain speaking will be requisite for the uncultivated, whereas the cultivated mind would gather the meaning from the more delicate wording. In short, he will give the man to understand that he is entering the house and advising on sufferance, and not as a *right*. He will remember that his poorest parishioner is at least a free man, and that himself is a Gentleman. And I warrant you he will generally after a time be understood, respected, and welcomed, and his advice, however plain, received with deference and attention. Here, again, the Gentleman is not playing a part, and thus he can be easy and natural.

Under this head, of his conduct in Society, may be placed the very important item of his treatment of enemies. They will always, in his case, be those who have injured him, or have taken a dislike to him ; there will be none whom he has injured, or with whom he has quarrelled, at least wittingly, or without having offered full reparation and amends, so far as may be. He may, however, indeed he must, cause offence by his firmness, by his fearlessness and candour on occasions, however his speaking the truth may have been "in love." He may have to oppose what is wrong or unadvisable, to rebuke or to reprove, and so to make enemies. But then, you will observe that he never speaks against them ; that he never details the grievance and subject-matter of the disagreement, nor even alludes to it to others, unless obliged, and then with shrinking and dislike. Also, if the character be at its very highest, he will, in detailing the circumstances of a disagreement, state the case fairly against himself. He (in the most rare cases) can even refrain from distorting the words of an opponent, or swerving them from their true and intended meaning, so as to make for himself in answering that opponent. At any rate, he does not "foul the wells" by fastening upon his antagonist some gratuitous imputation which would colour with suspicion even his most candid and earnest assertions and explanations. That the Gentleman would never, by any least word, silence, or deed, injure an enemy, is of course ; spite is utterly foreign from the Gentleman. And it will follow, from the gentleness of his character, that he will readily forgive ; from its sincerity and simplicity, that he will do it from his heart. King Richard's was a Gentleman's forgiveness. That forgiveness which "forgives, but can never feel the same to the offender," is that of the Churl.

I may note that (from his self-respect) the Gentleman can afford to offer his hand once and again, and have it sullenly refused ; can, in a case of duty, bow courteously in





spite of the risk of being cut : and this nobility is necessary, at least for the Parish Priest. The uninitiated will on such occasions tingle and smart with a sense of shame and humiliation, and, illogically, heartily wish that he had left undone that which a minute before he felt that it was right to do.

As to anonymous letters, it would be almost laughable to write down that he could not send one. I only mention them in order to say that I knew one of the blood with so fine a sense that he never even *read* one. Into the fire it went, so soon as he missed the name at the end (and he always, in a questionable case, looked at the end, being from his position exposed to such sneaking attacks or base information. He was the Head Master of a Public School). He never even entertained an accusation against a boy, volunteered privately, which the informer would not in person support. He would, in such case, call the boy up, tell him what had been alleged, merely expressing his abhorrence of the meanness of the informer, and refusing to hear any explanation or defence, "because," said he, "you are not accused."

Further, if a former friend, or one under old obligation to him, turn against or fail him, you will never find the Gentleman upbraid the traitor with those old disregarded favours. If you would see this attribute in perfection, read in Macaulay that account of the behaviour of Essex, on his trial, towards Bacon, the Queen's Advocate, pleading against the life of his patron and friend.

Once more. As the Gentleman has no little jealousies; there is another meanness—the weapon not of an open enemy, but of a conventional *friend*—from which he is, of course, free. I allude to that young-lady meanness which will praise another, and speak highly of him—not "damn with *faint* praise;" yet all the while letting slip little depreciations and admissions, which, after all, and as

intended, lower him in your mind—much, indeed, as certain modern commentators treat the Bible.

And now we come to the Gentleman *at home*. This is certainly the crucial test. It is undoubtedly, of all others, by far the most difficult sphere of action. There is the familiarity, the sense of undress, and of there being no need for "*company manners*." How this well-used word witnesses for the truth of what is here said! Certain rigorous restraints and obligations, of force, in Society, no longer in his own home hold back or bind a man. The Gentleman has, therefore, to be on his guard, and to keep a vigilant watch against the creeping of the least slovenliness or tarnish over his behaviour.

"Love's perfect blossom only blows
Where noble manners veil defect :
Angels may be familiar ; those
Who err, each other must respect."

This maxim I take from a very manual upon this department especially of the subject, a manual full of delicate subtleties—Coventry Patmore's "*Angel in the House*."

The true Gentleman, then, at home, does not drop any of those attentions and courtesies to Wife, Sisters, Father, Mother, which he is in the habit of paying to other ladies and gentlemen when in Society. It is perhaps necessary especially to notice that he is not *brusque* or neglectful to any lady merely because she may be his Wife or his Sister. Note the surliness or contempt in the demeanour of brothers sometimes. Compare the lover with the Husband in too many instances. Really many a man seems almost ashamed to pay the courteous attention, which *every* woman should claim, to that lady who is his Wife.

"The lover who, across a gulf
Of ceremony, views his Love,
And dares not yet address herself,
Pays worship to her stolen glove.

The gulf o'erleapt, the lover wed,
It happens oft (let truth be told),
The halo leaves the sacred head,
Respect grows lax, and worship cold."

A man may be permitted to be more at his ease at home, may let slip some little constraints necessary in Society, but which are not quite consistent with being *comfortable*. I shall not forbid, after his tiring day, that he should resort to slippers rather than to dress-boots; I allow him to wear out his old coats; I will not compel him to spoil his enjoyment of his Wife's playing by leaving, in order to turn over the pages of her music, his luxurious eye-closed revelling in his easy chair—it would not be courteous to cut off the power of thoroughly appreciating her performance. The husband need not be a Sir Charles Grandison. But he will neglect no little attention, no small courtesy, no delicate respect; and he will be careful to retain some ceremony, even in a *tête-à-tête* life.

" Keep your undrest familiar style
For strangers, but respect your friend,
Her most whose matrimonial smile
Is and asks honour without end.

" 'Tis found, and needs it must so be,
That life from love's allegiance flags,
When love forgets his majesty
In sloth's unceremonious rags.

" Let love make home a gracious Court ;
There let the world's rude, hasty ways
Be fashioned to a loftier port,
And learn to bow and stand at gaze."

And again :—

" Respects with threefold grace endure
The right to be familiar ; none
Whose ways forget that they are two
Perceive the bliss of being one."

It seems an absurd truism to say, Let the Husband or Brother who is ashamed to be attentive to his Wife or Sister, the Son who is ashamed of being deferential to his Father or Mother,—let these make no pretension to the name of Gentleman ; neither let him stain it with his touch, who, though he be the most polished gentleman in Society, is yet a sloven in his manner at home.

And further yet. The Gentleman respects himself ; and is not ungentlemanly even when alone. He will not even thus forego some decent ceremony ; not sit down to dinner, for instance, without some ordering of his appearance. He would not, I think, behave, when alone, otherwise than as he would in company. Supposing him to be accustomed to shave, he would not go with stubbly chin, left in a dirty-looking condition of bristle, even were he on a desert island ;—true, there he would probably be sure to let his beard grow. In short, come upon him as unexpectedly as you like, however he might be alone, the Gentleman would never be surprised doing anything ungentlemanly. For his tastes and manners would not, again, come from acting, nor his refinement of behaviour be as a Court suit put off, with a feeling of relief, upon his retirement to private life. It is his common wear ; rather, indeed, part of himself, his nature.

And now, what shall we say? Alas ! in one or another of all these and many other points, the Gentleman—the very Gentleman, too—may fail, ay, fail once and again. He is, indeed, never an adept, he is always a student, in this imperfect life ; a climber towards heights, and in his ever climbing he will sometimes slip. But even thus you may distinguish him. There is, with him, in his very failure, a mournful nobility. What would seem a slight matter to many, be unnoticed by most—a slight speck, not a stain—will smite him with shame, and burning, and resolve. Yes, the Gentleman is but a man, and may fail. But there is, not-

withstanding, a sphere for high gentlemanly conduct and bearing in the confessing his fault, and making amends, refusing alike his own palliations and those of others. And to own failures nobly is one of the few noble acts always possible to fallen creatures—creatures conscious of the Image in which they were created, but unable, through infirmity, to live up to their own high ideal. The Gentleman is, at least, too great, when perceiving himself in the wrong, to take refuge in temper; nor, if he apologise, and his apology be churlishly received, will he take fire, and retract in angry haste that which he had deliberately said. His action proceeded from a principle, which was not dependent for its justification upon results.

The Gentleman, I say, is always a student, for the attaining this character is greatly a matter of study. It is partly instinct—at least a thing more natural to some than to others, as with music, but yet in great measure a matter of instruction, experience, practice. Some may have the ear, and the more readily catch the delicate skill, and grand power, and fine harmony; yet even these do not draw near perfection without great pains, much observation, many recoveries from mistakes. And as Professor Hullah declared that all may attain to at least some correctness of knowledge and execution in music by pains, attention, and practice, so it may be said of this art—for we must call it an art until it has become nature with us. A finished artificial Gentleman has attained to the art which veils art. A perfect, real Gentleman has nothing to assume or to conceal—he is acting *naturally*.

But he is always learning, and each failure, detected by himself or by another, and deeply laid to heart, becomes, indeed, the rung of a ladder by which he ascends. A mean thing done and once brought to his notice and perception is burnt into his soul, and the lesson never forgotten. I am not to give myself as a specimen of anything noble, but I am

yet pleased to trace something of the sense in a slight recollection of boyhood. I had, well knowing I was welcome, taken one of my elder brother's books from the shelf. For some good reason (it was late, I fancy) he presently told me to put it by. Adroitly misconceiving him, and pretending to fancy that he grudged me the loan, I, with careful meanness, apologised on that score for my having taken it. He, without any anger, also without any false delicacy, quietly unmasked me, and, coming at once to the point, stigmatised my conduct as "dirty." I said no more, at once perceiving the truth of his verdict; but I thought the thing over until my face burnt with shame, and I stood before him and begged his pardon ere I left the room. I remember he seemed surprised, and said that he had not meant to make the matter of that importance. But it was done to satisfy myself, and I like to think that this slight incident may be a trivial instance of that affinity with better things, and of the germ of the keen gentlemanly sense, which is quick to perceive a meanness when pointed out, abhors it, casts it forth thenceforward, and never forgets the lesson.

Yes, "here, where all things limp and halt," this excellence must ever be a matter of learning. For one thing, there are so many *mixed* actions. Feather instances serve, perhaps, best to show the way of the wind. Here is another illustration from a slight episode. Driving with a friend in a dog-cart which he had hired, I was anxious to do my small part by paying the turnpikes. Being, however, on the wrong side for the turnpike-keeper (a woman), and desirous to be beforehand with my friend, I threw the money on the road, thus giving the woman the trouble of picking it up. For this I was justly reprov'd by my friend, and told that I ought to be made to pick it up myself. My intention had been gentlemanly, but the act, through want of care and thought and exactness, was faulty. Slight as the thing was, it set me a-thinking, and may serve to shew the

difficulty, as well as the importance, of preserving the balance in actions, and of at once

"This way and that dividing the swift mind."

A little grit may spoil the perfect working of such very delicate machinery.

I can fancy an Architect giving his life-work to the devising and perfecting of one exquisite design. When young he originated the idea; in manhood it has taken shape; some plan, which yet he sees to be meagre and far below his ideal, lies upon the paper. This experience and that suggestion all come in; even detected mistakes assist; but he grows old planning, correcting, developing—never completing. And in this life he shall never behold the Perfect Building. It is still an Ideal, of which the Reality is not grasped. Even thus must it be with all our endeavours,—although they be not unassisted endeavours,—towards any excellence on this side Heaven. Thus accordingly with the Gentleman's ideal of what the perfect character should be. By degrees he lays down a plan; he is ever working towards it; it is never here attained. Nay, the more he attains, the more his knowledge extends the plan.

"'The highest-mounted mind,' he said,

'Still sees the summit overhead.'"

"I count not myself to have attained," is his pensive reflection, but,—all the more for this,—"*I press toward the mark.*" Indeed, it is—excepting that he does gain *some* ground—like, with the back to the setting sun, the pursuing an ever-lengthening shadow. He is often saddened by the contemplation of his own inadequacy and shortcomings, but never grows morbid—*i.e.*, his sadness does not cause him to sit down to inactive wringing of hands, but rather impels him on, still forward, in the hopeless race, towards the ever-flying goal. If the melody of his life be never perfect—if it become sometimes "like sweet bells jangled,

out of tune, and harsh," it will not be purposeless in that confusion, but rather, as bells beginning or ending, which seem to wander about disconsolately after the even melody they cannot at once find.* But, mark, you shall have them burst out presently into the clear liquid race; aye, and yet again, if they again before long appear to halt in a new perplexity.

It is more than time to end this daring yet inadequate Essay. Let me first notice one objection which might lurk against many of the marks and most of the instances here brought forward. They are so slight; such mere trivialities; such little flaws; such little touches. But let me urge the analogy that, in light and shade, not the depths and heights, but the half-tints, make the finish: in colour, the greys, not the pronounced hues, are the test; in a statue the slight chippings, the least touches, give the marble its perfection. And I have supposed the rough cutting of the block, even the well-proportioned shape, and have endeavoured rather for these subtleties of finish—endeavoured, I keenly feel, with poor approach to success; the graces are so impalpable, the touches *so* subtle, the tints so delicate, the

* Let Lancelot du Lake stand as an instance of a noble life, upon the rhythm of whose music confusion has come. With grave sadness Arthur's greatest knight directs the gaze of his hero-worshipper to a true Ideal:—

" In me there dwells
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great :
—There is the man ! "

Yes, Arthur, the blameless king, the Poet's Ideal, who went away in the shadow-ship long ago. And how shall Lancelot stay the jangle of his life, and find the even music? Hopeless, indeed, seemed the case !

" His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith, unfaithful, kept him falsely true.
—Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart ! "

But the Idyll closes with the assurance that the broken music of the great knight's life overtook the lost melody ere the end.

hues so fleeting. Ask Turner for a recipe for his colouring; aye, point to an ever-growing Sunset, and ask a catalogue of the hues and blendings of tints with which you are to reproduce it; but even then refrain from demanding a list of the subtleties and delicate touches which result in the GENTLEMAN. They are, as sunset colours, new in blending, in tint, in juxtaposition,—new in all their circumstances, for every new occasion. Surely of this, too, it may be said—

“ Here they speak best who best express
Their inability to speak ;
And none are strong, but who confess
With happy skill that they are weak.”

However, even rough sketches may yet hint pictures to kindred spirits ; sketches, however inadequate and rude, yet done with a true purpose and after a lofty conception, in the mind. And, seeking after this Ideal, in specimens necessarily imperfect, it shall be with me,—

“ As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely through all hindrance finds the man
Behind it.”



MY POEMS.

A FEW frail wild flowers do I cast abroad,
Scattered upon the great world's open road,
Where much of white-heaped dust already lies
That once seemed graceful in the gatherer's eyes.
Smile on their simple hope, O passer by !
Even as the wheels go o'er them, and they die.

The same done into Latin, by the REV. W. PALEY ANDERSON, B.D.,
Vicar of Winsford, Somerset.

Spargimus agrestes, tenuissima munera, flores,
Qua terit assiduè plurima turba viam.
Quæ modo deliciæ risere legentibus, illic
Pulveris albescunt pars inhonora rosæ
Spes quibus est simplex, ne sperne hæc sarta, viator,
Prætereunte tuâ vel moritura rotâ.



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